OCTOBER 22, 2001

JOE BIDEN MOUTHS OFF By Michael Crowley

THE NEW REPUBLIC

TUPAC'S GRIM RHYTHMS
By John McWhorter

W.'S ISLAMIC GURU
By Franklin Foer

GOING IT ALONE

WHY AMERICA HAS NO REAL ALLIES IN THE MUSLIM WORLD
Lawrence F. Kaplan
Joshua Teitelbaum
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The Editors

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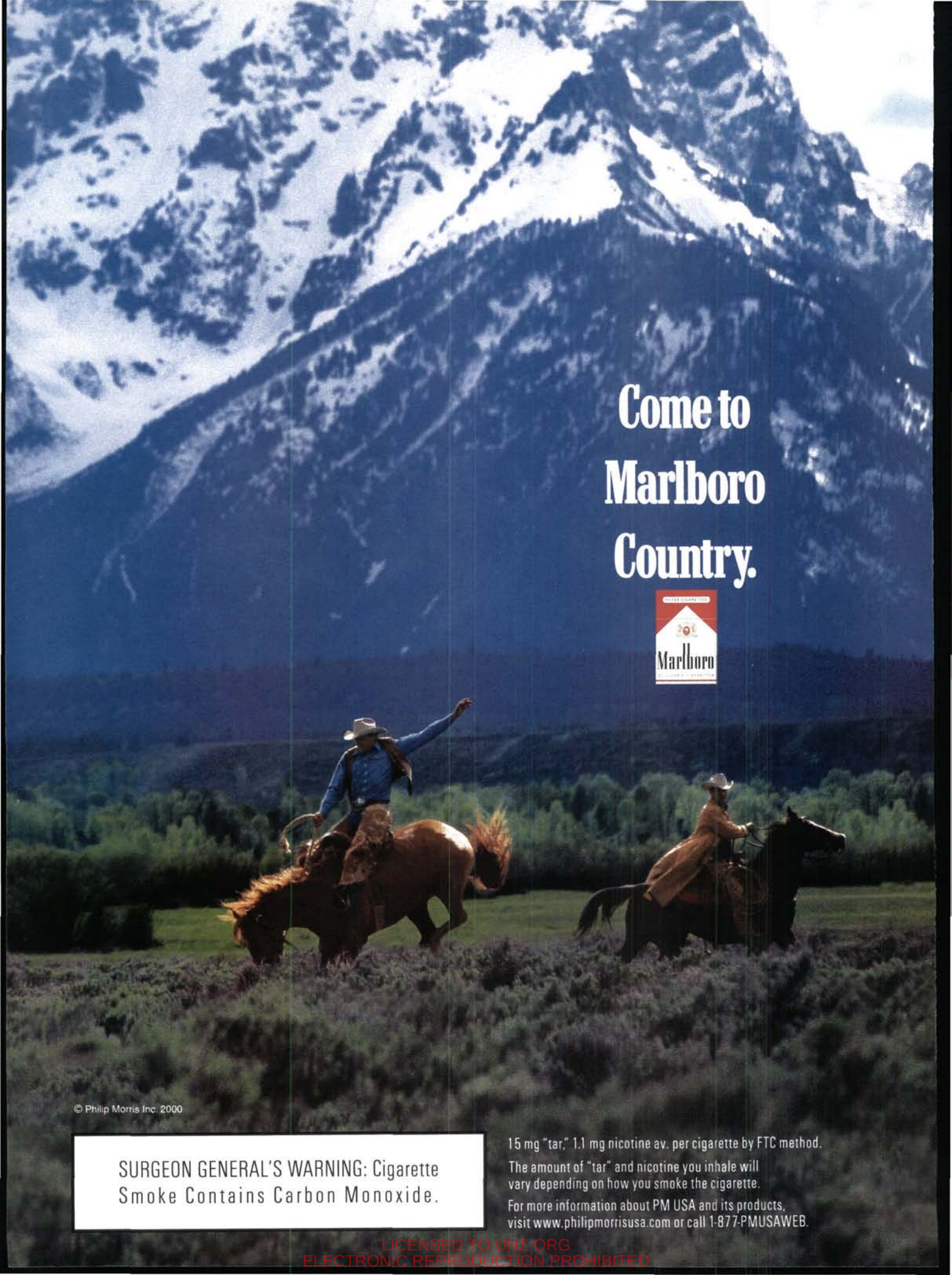

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts

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CORRESPONDENCE

Profile shot

TO THE EDITORS:

As a white teenager in a small town in Northern California, I was "profiled" every weekend by the local police ("Arrested Development," by James Forman Jr., September 10). If there were ever three or more boys in one car, we were likely to be under observation, occasionally stopped, searched for alcohol and/or drugs, and asked about our business—not always nicely. Nor without reason: We were responsible for most of the mischief in our town, be it innocent or serious.

Police will put their resources where the action is, and in urban areas young black and Hispanic men are responsible for the majority of violent crime, vandalism, gang activity, and drug dealing. Ergo, if you are a student at the Maya Angelou Public Charter School in Washington, D.C., you are more likely to be stopped by police than are other segments of the population, not just because of your race but because of your age, demeanor, neighborhood, the way you are dressed, the company you keep, and events beyond your control—like a recent crime committed in the area by someone who fits your "profile."

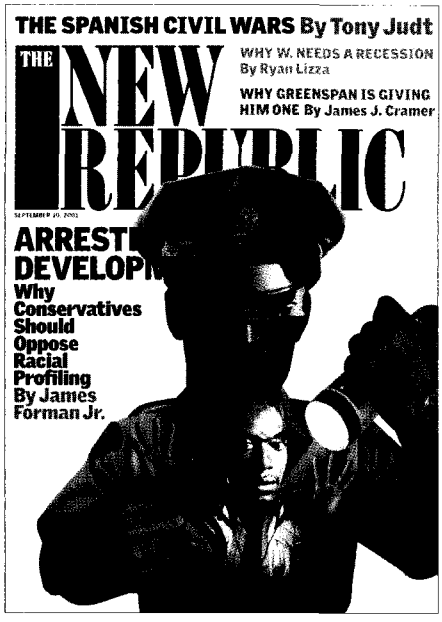
Annoying, perhaps even insulting? Yes. A structural barrier to succeeding in life? Absolutely not. Bottom line: If you're not involved in illegal behavior, there's nothing the police can or will do to you. There is a civilian complaint process for abusive cops. The indignity of such stops is simply no excuse for failure in this country, a distinction that Forman needs to make clear to his students.

ANDREAS SAMSON
Los Angeles, California

Social insecurity

TO THE EDITORS:

Jonathan Chait is so intent on criticizing Robert Johnson for not being his kind of black leader—Johnson, after all, has the temerity to believe that "wealth" is a good thing—that he seriously misstates the impact of Social Security on African Americans ("Painted Black," August 27 & September 3). First, it is misleading for Chait to focus on Social Security's disability and survivors' benefits. The president's Commission to Strengthen Social Security has explicitly stated that it will make no changes to those benefits. That means any discussion of how Social Security affects African Americans should focus on the retirement portion of the program. Here Chait is simply wrong to say that Social Security's progressive benefit structure "more than makes up for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THE NEW REPUBLIC
WHY W. NEEDS A RECESSION By Ryan Lizza
WHY GREENSPAN IS GIVING HIM ONE By James J. Cramer
ARREST
DEVELOP
Why Conservatives Should Oppose Racial Profiling By James Forman Jr.

any loss they suffer from dying younger." For example, a 1996 RAND Corporation study found that African Americans' rates of return were approximately 1 percent lower than those for whites. The result was a net lifetime transfer of wealth from blacks to whites averaging nearly $10,000 per person.

Even more important is the result for African Americans compared to whites with equal incomes. For example, assume that a 30-year-old black man and white man each earn $30,000 per year over their working lifetimes. By the time they retire, they will both have paid $136,740 in Social Security taxes over their lifetimes and will be entitled to monthly Social Security benefits of $1,162. However, the white man can expect to live until age 81. If he does, he will receive $189,389 in total Social Security benefits. The black man, in contrast, can expect to live only to age 79. He can expect to receive only $161,750, almost $27,000 less than his white counterpart.

Finally, even if Chait is correct and African Americans do fare better than whites under Social Security, it would still be a bad deal. They would still be receiving a below-market rate of return and, more importantly, have no control over or ownership of their money. A system of individually owned, privately invested accounts will give African Americans an opportunity to accumulate real wealth that can be passed on to their heirs and used to rebuild their communities.

MICHAEL D. TANNER
Director of the Cato Project on Social Security Privatization
Cato Institute
Washington, D.C.

JONATHAN CHAIT REPLIES:

In a discussion of whether or not Social Security redistributes money from blacks to whites, it is misleading not to focus on the entire program, as I do, but to separate out one part, as Michael D. Tanner does. And even if we do look at just the retirement parts of Social Security, he's on shaky ground. Blacks differ from whites in two important ways: They die younger, which means they collect benefits for fewer years, but they also earn less money, which means they get a better deal from Social Security's progressive structure. Tanner tries to look at the aspects of Social Security that redistribute wealth from blacks, but ignores the aspects that redistribute wealth to them.

The larger point of my piece was how strange it is for conservatives to rely on such a narrowly racialistic calculus. Replacing annual retirement benefits with a one-time lump sum payment would put retirees in danger of outliving their nest egg. Even if such a system gave a slightly better deal to blacks in the aggregate, it wouldn't make sense for anybody.

Tax driver

TO THE EDITORS:

Anand Giridharadas's attack on tax competition ("Saved Havens," August 27 & September 3) was sloppy and biased. For instance, he implies that "tax havens" are repositories for laundered money, yet the U.S. government admits that about half of the world's money laundering occurs in the United States. The United Nations, meanwhile, acknowledges that criminals avoid low-tax jurisdictions because strong financial privacy laws are "a red flag" for law enforcement officials.

He refers to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the international bureaucracy that is pushing for tax harmonization, as "a club of 30 free-market democracies." In reality most OECD member nations are European welfare states. If France is a free-market country, then I'm a socialist.

Giridharadas asserts that low-tax jurisdictions distort markets by allowing taxpayers to enjoy the benefits of a high-tax country while paying the taxes of a low-tax country (akin to "paying Sears prices for the coat you got at Saks," he writes). But since the disputed income is being earned in the low-tax jurisdiction, high-tax nations actually want people to pay Saks prices for coats they are buying at Sears. He naïvely repeats the oft-cited claim that tax evasion results in $70 billion of foregone tax revenue every year.

continued on page 45

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Talk Show

On Friday, September 14, Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) hosted a panel entitled "How to think about the Islamic-Afghan Terrorist Threat." Charles H. Fairbanks Jr., Director of SAIS's Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, served as both moderator and as a panelist. In his extemporaneous presentation, Fairbanks said the United States could respond to September 11 in one of two ways. It could retaliate against the governments that supported the attack. Or it could limit its response to Osama bin Laden and his followers. Fairbanks—a self-described conservative—argued for the former, in part because the United States wouldn't be able to find bin Laden himself. And then he said something stupid: "I'll bet anyone here a Koran on that."

After the presentations the audience asked questions. In response to a question about which governments might be responsible for the September 11 attacks, Fairbanks said, "I think that at the top of the list are Iraq, Pakistan, and the Palestinian Authority," and then he went on to say, "Unfortunately, Palestinians hate us and that's a painful fact. . ." At which point a woman in the crowd interrupted. She called his talk "a pathetic attempt at stand-up comedy," and accused him of "innuendos intended to encourage and to assist people in conducting hate crimes . . . toward Muslims. . . ." Fairbanks tried to regain the floor, but she interrupted him again. He apologized for the Koran comment, but when she interrupted him yet again, he called for her to be removed. Security never came, but eventually the woman stopped speaking and the forum ended.

On Sunday Fairbanks learned from a colleague that Stephen Szabo, the interim dean of SAIS, was concerned that his comments might be deemed offensive. The dean wanted a letter of regret. Fairbanks agreed. The two men negotiated the wording and, on Monday, a letter was sent to everyone who had been invited to the panel. Fairbanks thought the unpleasantness was over.

Two days later Fairbanks was fired. In a letter, Szabo explained that his position—director of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute—was being eliminated. Szabo later insisted to me that the firing was prompted not by the substance of Fairbanks's comments but by the panel's chaotic nature, which convinced him that Fairbanks was ill equipped for an administrative role. Fairbanks could retain the less prestigious title of research professor.

Ever since September 11 the American left has been warning that war fever threatens free speech. The day after the World Trade Center fell, *The American Prospect* explained that "a number of government agencies and their cheerleaders would be clearly tempted to lock the Bill of Rights away in some basement dustbin of the National Archives." On September 27 novelist Barbara Kingsolver told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* that "Patriotism threatens free speech with death." And, on October 1, Richard Reeves published an op-ed in *The New York Times* entitled "Patriotism Calls Out the Censor."

But patriotism didn't cost Charles Fairbanks his job. He lost his job because of identity politics paranoia. In other words, he lost his job because of the culture of the American left. And his case reminds us that when the left condemns the war against terrorism for threatening free speech, its real motive may not be devotion to free speech at all. Its real motive may simply be hostility to the war against terrorism.

It is historically true, of course, that America's wars have sometimes led to the suppression of antiwar speech. And it is also true that since September 11 several scattered incidents have continued that ugly tradition. Two small-town newspaper columnists, one in Texas and one in Oregon, have been fired for suggesting that President Bush's decision not to immediately return to Washington after the attacks was cowardly. And after "Politically Incorrect" host Bill Maher declared on the air that America's practice of shooting cruise missiles at faraway targets was more cowardly than what the hijackers did, presidential Press Secretary Ari Fleischer stupidly warned Americans to "watch what they say, watch what they do."

You may have heard about these incidents because they've received a great deal of attention. But you probably haven't heard about the professor at Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, California, who was placed on indefinite leave for offending students with a series of confrontational questions about why Muslims condemn the World Trade Center attacks but don't condemn terrorism against Israel. Or the Penn State professor who said on his website that it was worth killing innocents in order to topple the governments of Afghanistan and Iran—and then received an e-mail from a top administrator warning him that Iranian and Afghan "students would find such comments insensitive and perhaps even intimidating." Or the officers of the Berkeley Student Senate who proposed raising the school newspaper's rent because it ran a cartoon that depicted two Arabs wearing turbans—with a flight manual in the background—on their way to hell.

These attacks on free speech also continue an ugly tradition—the tradition of speech codes and ideological witch-hunts that has stained university life over the past two decades. In academia, the precinct in which it holds the most sway, the left's record on free speech was not good before September 11 and it has not been good since September 11. The main difference is that, since September 11, the specter of censorship has become a way to discredit the war against terrorism, so some on the left have appropriated the free speech rhetoric that until last month they generally eschewed.

The point is that free speech is always balanced against competing principles. Justifying the protests against the school newspaper, Robert Chala of Berkeley's Arab Student Union and Students for Justice in Palestine said, "Freedom of speech should not come at the cost of anyone's safety." John Ashcroft would probably agree. The question is what constitutes a threat to someone's "safety" and what does not. For the left, speech that offends minority students constitutes an implicit threat to their safety and therefore merits suppression. Threats to national security—or rhetoric that offends those who suffered on September 11—do not. What distinguishes leftists from other Americans, then, isn't their commitment to civil liberties but their lack of commitment to the anti-terrorism efforts with which those civil liberties may conflict.

On that particular conflict, by the way, the left may be entirely correct. We should be wary of the argument that safety during times of war requires restrictions on free speech; such restrictions are usually just a way to protect the government from legitimate criticism. A professor who declares that he is voting for Osama bin Laden for president should suffer no retaliation whatsoever from his university. But you don't have much credibility on that point unless you're equally wary of censoring language that offends ethnic and racial minorities. And, for the last 20 years, the left hasn't been wary of that at all—quite the contrary. Just ask Charles H. Fairbanks Jr.

PETER BEINART

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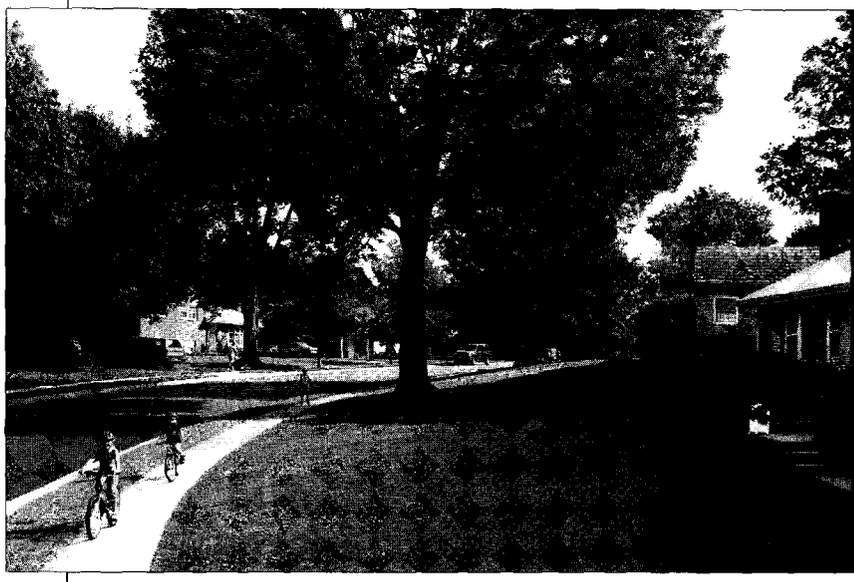

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War

THE AIR CAMPAIGN that the United States, with the morally spectacular assistance of Great Britain, inaugurated against Afghanistan on October 7 appears designed to make the medieval kingdom of the Taliban safe for operations closer to the ground. Army helicopters and commando units seem destined for the next phase of the campaign, so as to find the caves in which Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and the other self-styled Saladins are hiding. Sooner or later American special ops forces, armed not least with their recollections of the ruins in New York and Washington, will find them. For now, it is important for Americans to understand that, if these indeed are the war plans of the American government, Operation Enduring Freedom represents a great correction in the contemporary American understanding of warfare. In recent decades, in the Gulf of Arabia, in Somalia, and in the Balkans, the resort to American force, both successful and unsuccessful, has bequeathed American presidents and planners a pack of illusions about military power and its uses. With any luck, the great post-September sobriety will do away with those illusions, too.

The most renowned of those illusions, of course, is the Powell Doctrine, a crude and crippling approach to military strategy that may be summarized (in the words of Billie Holiday) as all or nothing at all. But the nature of the enemy in Afghanistan and the nature of the terrain in Afghanistan have retired Colin Powell's great teaching. In a useful analysis in *The New York Times*, Michael R. Gordon remarked that the Powell Doctrine "has already been one casualty in the Bush administration's war on terrorism," and rightly concluded that "the Powell Doctrine seems inappropriate for many of the terrorist threats that the United States is likely to confront in future years." In this war, calibration and cunning are everything. The American military will have to rely upon an exceedingly un-Powellian kind of relentlessness.

The Powell Doctrine's fetishization of "overwhelming force" made it seem very hard-boiled, but in truth it was very soft-boiled: just a swaggering version of the misplaced delicacy with which America has come to regard the experience of Americans in war. As a consequence of our so-called victory in the Gulf, we came to believe that we could wage wars in which Americans would kill but not be killed; and as a consequence of our successful bombing of Milosevic's Serbia, we came to believe that air power, and specifically the new technologies of precision guidance, would make war no longer dangerous to the warriors. Never mind that the Bush administration in 1991 defined the American objective in the Gulf in a way that emancipated us from the really urgent and perilous ground operation, namely, the march to Baghdad for the purpose of relieving Iraq and the world of the only regime to have used weapons of mass destruction against its own population; and never mind that the Clinton administration in 1999 was theologically opposed to the prosecution of a ground war to stop the ethnic cleansing and the ethnic slaughter in Kosovo. An era without body bags appeared to have dawned. (This fantasy of immunity in battle animates also Donald Rumsfeld's dream of the militarization of space.)

To this unrealistically tender sentiment about soldiers in war, the Clinton administration added an unrealistically tender sentiment about civilians in war. This is not to be confused with the scruple about non-combatants that is a moral cornerstone of every just war. Operation Enduring Freedom certainly appears to be proceeding in conformity with that time-honored scruple, in its targeting as well as in its food drops. No, it was this remark by Bill Clinton in 1998 that made emotional exquisiteness into another impediment to military action: "The night before we took action against the terrorist operations in Afghanistan and the Sudan, I was ... up till 2:30 in the morning, trying to make absolutely sure that at that chemical plant there was no night shift. I ... didn't want some person who was a nobody to me—but who may have a family to feed and a life to live, and probably had no earthly idea what else was going on there—to die needlessly." Who, exactly, is for noncombatants dying needlessly? Also, as a result of Clinton's little foray into saintliness, the United States may have bombed the wrong target and left bin Laden's chemical factory in the Sudan untouched.

But things are different now. If America is less afraid of body bags now, it may be because we have already sustained six thousand of them (or we would have sustained six thousand of them, if many of the victims of Al Qaeda had not been burned and crushed into nothingness). We may be witnessing the end of Vietnam Syndrome, and Somalia Syndrome, and Gulf War Syndrome: a war without syndromes, waged in our own defense. A just war that is not holy war, but wholly war. ■

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N O T E B O O K

IDIOCY WATCH, CONT'D: "Patriotism threatens free speech with death. It is infuriated by thoughtful hesitation, constructive criticism of our leaders and pleas for peace. It despises people of foreign birth. It has specifically blamed homosexuals, feminists and the American Civil Liberties Union. In other words, the American flag stands for intimidation, censorship, violence, bigotry, sexism, homophobia and shoving the Constitution through a paper shredder. Whom are we calling terrorists here?"—Barbara Kingsolver, novelist, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 27

"Six men [the heads of Viacom, Fox News Corp., Disney, Vivendi, Sony, and Time Warner-AOL] are deciding what you're seeing in film, and they own all the small companies.... Now, within reason, they let [filmmakers] do certain things, and that is far better obviously than, say, the Arabs where they don't let you do anything, and I agree it's relative. But we are in a dilemma. We have too much order.... And I think the revolt on September 11 was about order. It was about fuck you, fuck your order... And is it time perhaps to reconsider the world order? Is it time to wonder why the banks have joined the movie companies and all the corporations, and where this is all going?"—Oliver Stone, quoted by Jeffrey Wells on *Reel.com*, October 10

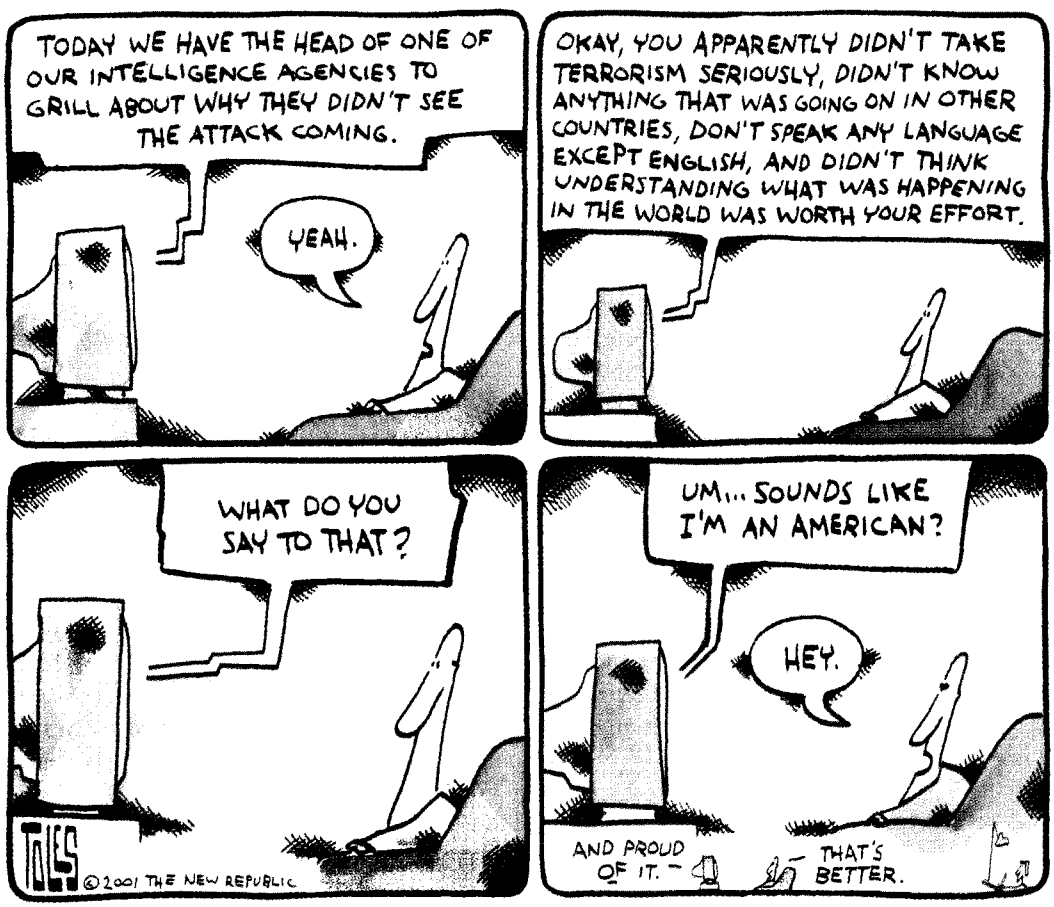
"I'm not sure which is more frightening: the horror that engulfed New York City or the apocalyptic rhetoric emanating daily from the White House." —Eric Foner, *London Review of Books*, October 4

"[Relief organizations] should be first giving priority to those widows who were at home with their babies and those widowers who lost their wives.... It should be given on the basis and priority of one man and one woman in a marital relationship.... This is just another example of how the gay agenda is seeking to overturn the one man-one woman relationship from center stage in America, taking advantage of this tragedy."—Rev. Lou Sheldon, Chairman of the Traditional Values Coalition, arguing against decisions by the Red Cross and others to give benefits to gays and lesbians who lost partners in the September 11 attacks, Cybercast News Service (*cnsnews.com*), October 4

"Allah (God) knows that the powerful will not heed a warning coming from their ex-slave or from the weak or from the abject, so the Qur'an teaches that Allah (God) then seizes that nation with distress and affliction, that it might humble itself. For only in humility can the proud and the powerful heed the Guidance of God, which is mercy and grace from Himself. Allah (God) used this tragedy, hopefully, to bring a great nation to Himself."—Louis Farrakhan, September 16

"What is Osama bin Laden? He's America's family secret. He is the American president's dark doppelgänger. The savage twin of all that purports to be beautiful and civilised. He has been sculpted from the spare rib of a world laid to waste by America's foreign policy ... [i]ts marauding multinationals who are taking over the air we breathe, the ground we stand on, the water we drink, the thoughts we think. Now that the family secret has been spilled, the twins are blurring into one another and gradually becoming interchangeable." —Arundhati Roy, *The Guardian*, September 29

"Dear Mr. President: We support your actions in the wake of this serious American crisis. We are particularly impressed


TODAY WE HAVE THE HEAD OF ONE OF OUR INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES TO GRILL ABOUT WHY THEY DIDN'T SEE THE ATTACK COMING.
YEAH.
OKAY, YOU APPARENTLY DIDN'T TAKE TERRORISM SERIOUSLY, DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING THAT WAS GOING ON IN OTHER COUNTRIES, DON'T SPEAK ANY LANGUAGE EXCEPT ENGLISH, AND DIDN'T THINK UNDERSTANDING WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THE WORLD WAS WORTH YOUR EFFORT.
WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THAT?
UM... SOUNDS LIKE I'M AN AMERICAN?
HEY.
AND PROUD OF IT.
THAT'S BETTER.
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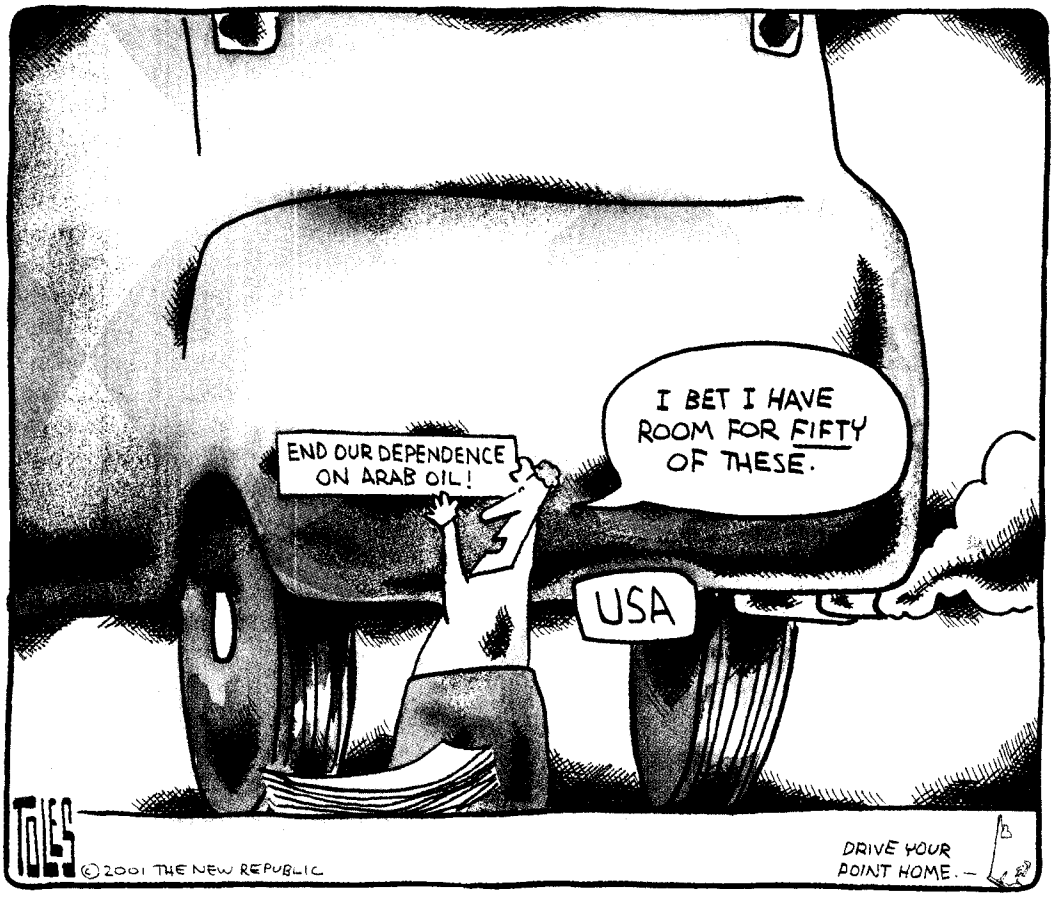
with your challenge to leaders of foreign nations that may be harboring the individuals responsible for these outrageous acts.... If you are a man true to your word, we have one international terrorist whom we suggest that you arrest immediately.... His name is WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON."—T.V. Weber and Alida Weber, published on The Reagan Information Interchange (*reagan.com*), the website of radio talk show host (and presidential son) Michael Reagan

"Obviously there are immediate comments one can make, in particular on the nauseating media reception, whose cheap pathos seemed unconsciously dictated by a White House intent on smothering the situation in sentiment in order to demonstrate the undemonstrable: namely, that 'Americans are united as never before since Pearl Harbor.' I suppose this means that they are united by the fear of saying anything that contradicts this completely spurious media consensus." —Fredric Jameson, *London Review of Books*, October 4

Idiocy Watch would like to thank Evan Burroughs, Tom Drinko, Steve Messina, Alexander Wardell, Holly Watson, *London Review of Books*, and the many others who offered contributions. An expanded version of Idiocy Watch may still be found at THE NEW REPUBLIC ONLINE (*www.thenewrepublic.com*); nominees for inclusion may be submitted to online@tnr.com.

TORCH SONG: When President Bush, livid over leaks from Capitol Hill, announced that he was restricting classified briefings, plenty of congresspeople protested, albeit quietly. But Senator Bob Torricelli was unusually vocal. Appearing on MSNBC's "Hardball," the New Jersey Democrat declared, "No matter how angry [Bush] may be that people leaked that information ... we're more angry. It's very upsetting.... We cannot not have the Congress briefed, can't not have the Congress involved in a democratic society. Therefore both bodies have to trust each other with the information." All good points—so good, in fact, that Bush later reversed himself on his briefing restrictions—but was Torricelli really the right person to be making them? After all, it wasn't that long ago that Torricelli himself, then a member of the House, was caught leaking classified information. In 1995 the House Ethics Committee found that Torricelli had acted "contrary to" a House rule when he sent a letter to President Clinton—and the *The New York Times*—disclosing classified information about the misdeeds of a paid CIA asset in Guatemala. What was that about trusting people with information?

LIFE IMITATES PARODY: After enduring a severe lashing for his recent proclamation that September 11 marked "the end of the age of irony," *Vanity Fair* editor Graydon Carter has now replaced his original statement with one equally absurd. "Only a fool would declare the end of irony," Carter told *The Washington Post* on October 10. "I said it was the end of the age of ironing"—explaining that he now wears his shirts straight out of the dryer. (Offering an alternative excuse to *Inside.com*, he added, "If I was talking about irony, I was talking about a specific form of television irony.") Quite a comeback. Sadly, it doesn't even get points for originality. On September 30 *Flak Magazine*, an online media-watchdog journal, had run a parody of the end-of-irony fad entitled, you guessed it, "The End of Ironing"—about two small-town women considering putting their irons down for good. Either Flak's editors read Carter's mind, or he reads their site. We're betting on the latter. ■



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W.'s unreliable adviser on Islam.

Blind Faith

By Franklin Foer

Cleveland-Marshall College of Law Professor David Forte might seem an unorthodox choice for the role of presidential adviser on Islam. For one thing, he's not Muslim. For another, he doesn't speak Arabic. His academic specialty is U.S. constitutional law, and he readily admits that he "dabble[s]" in Islamic jurisprudence. "That's why I call myself a student and not an expert," he told me.

But thanks to the aggressive promotion of his work by two influential conservative think tanks, the Hudson Institute and the Heritage Foundation, Forte's writings on Islam have found their way onto the reading lists of Defense Undersecretary Douglas Feith and the National Security Council's Elliot Abrams. UN Ambassador John Negroponte has requested his oeuvre; State Department officials have quizzed him on his views. And when President Bush addressed Congress last month, he seemed to pluck whole phrases from Forte's writings. Or, as one official told *The Washington Post*: The president's speech was "Forte-ed."

In particular Bush has embraced Forte's argument that Al Qaeda are theological heretics. They practice, Forte contends, an esoteric strain of Islam that traces to a seventh-century sect. "[The terrorists] are not religious," Forte told the *Post*. "They are a new form of fascist tyranny." But Forte is a less than reliable source. The problem isn't just his weak background in modern Islamic politics; it's his ulterior ideological motive. Forte doesn't just want to redeem Islam from its critics. As a Catholic conservative who serves on a Vatican task force on strengthening family, he wants to redeem religious orthodoxy itself—or, at least, cleanse it of the extremist stain. "Nothing this evil could be religious," he is fond of saying. It's a bromide that jibes perfectly with Bush's own unabashed fondness for religiosity of all stripes. Unfortunately, it may be wrong.

Until last month Forte's primary claim to fame was his writing on Catholic legal theory. Along with a growing band of conservative scholars—Princeton's Robert P. George, Tulsa University's Russell Hitinger—Forte promoted Thomas Aquinas's theology of natural law. America, they argue, was founded by men who agreed with Aquinas on the primacy of transcendent divine law. But secular politicians have junked up the founders' system, adding gratuitous and wicked laws. "Faith is an outlaw in the public square," Forte lectured in 1996 at the Heritage Foundation. In the *Cleveland State Law Review* in 1990, he compared government regulation to the Pharisees, the rabbis who challenged Jesus. And when the laws of God conflict with the laws of man, there's no question which side Forte takes. He has proposed a doctrine called "justified non-compliance," which allows citizens to "refuse to abide by" laws they consider onerous or morally reprehensible.

Forte's interest in Islam began in law school with a B+ paper in a comparative jurisprudence class at Columbia, which he later published. As an academic and fellow at the Heritage Foundation, he continued to write the occasional law review essay—on such subjects as the standing of Islamic law in American courts, the Orientalist Joseph Schacht, and attitudes toward theft in *sharia* (the body of Islamic laws). Only in the 1990s did his interest move beyond the theoretical. After assisting a pro bono immigration case on behalf of Pakistani asylum seekers, he began to write passionately about Islamic persecution of Christians.

Forte quickly found himself part of a growing movement, as former Reagan aides Michael Horowitz and Gary Bauer helped turn Christian persecution into one of the religious right's signature issues. But they soon faced a problem: Islamic regimes reacted to the criticism by calling the conservatives anti-Muslim bigots. It was Forte, according to Horowitz, who figured out how to beat the rap. Henceforth the conservative activists would cast themselves as Islamophiles, praising the religion at every turn and dismissing the Islamic persecutors as traitors to their faith. As Forte explained in his 1999 book on Islamic law, "Though radicals often create an effigy of the West as a 'devil,' their real animus is against traditional Islam."

It hasn't always been clear to which Muslim "radicals" Forte is referring . In the past his chief targets have been regimes like those of Pakistan and Sudan that oppress non-Muslims domestically. More recently, as Osama bin Laden has taken center stage, Forte has adapted the argument to apply to him. But the basic point—as articulated in a series of law review articles, op-eds, and congressional testimony—remains the same: The Islamic militants aren't true Muslims at all; they find their "inspiration" in a seventh-century sect of puritan thugs called the Kharijites. "[They] held that any Muslim who commits a sin was an apostate, an unbeliever who could never re-enter the fold of Islam and must be killed." For over 50 years, as Forte describes it, the Kharijites ferociously opposed both the developing Sunni and Shia traditions of Islam—going so far as to assassinate Ali, one of the competitors for Mohammed's mantle.

The historical analogy is deeply comforting. Today's extremists, in Forte's telling, are theologically marginal and far removed from the rest of Islam. They represent, as he put it in a column posted on the Heritage Foundation's website after the attacks, "[a] tradition that Islam early on rejected as opposed to the universal message of its Prophet." And those who say otherwise simply don't get religion. "We have a highly secularized elite in media and government and the academy. When they talk about religion it is often in a superficial and deprecating manner. When they talk about Southern Baptists, they talk about gay bashing. When they talk about Islam, they talk about jihad. They patronizingly assume that violence is an essential part of Islam."

But serious scholars of Islam dispute Forte's interpretation. When I sent his writings to Marius Deeb, a professor of modern Arab political thought at Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, he

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Putin's Moment of Truth

Michael McFaul is the Peter and Helen Bing Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution and an assistant professor of political science at Stanford University.

On September 11, 2001, Russian president Vladimir Putin was the first world leader to speak with President Bush. He offered his unwavering support to combat our common enemy, terrorism. That same day, I received dozens of calls and e-mails from friends in Russia expressing support for my country. This outpouring of support from Russia has convinced me that Russians and Americans share common values and have the potential to be part of one international community. What unites us is much more important than what divides us. Polls that I conducted with Harvard professor Timothy Colton last year provide hard data to support my emotional, unscientific reading of Russian attitudes toward the dreadful September day. Our surveys show that two-thirds of the Russian people embrace democratic ideals and practices.

Since that first phone call to Bush, however, Putin has allowed some of his advisers to add qualifications to Russia's support. His senior military and intelligence officers are pushing him to retreat to old ways of thinking regarding international politics, to worry more about NATO troops in Central Asia and old Soviet allies, Iraq and Iran. At the time of this writing, Putin had not committed unequivocally to the new U.S. military and diplomatic campaign against radical Islamic fundamentalism.

Ironically, the recent attack against the United States offers Russia an opportunity to join the West. The disputes that divided Russia and the United States throughout the latter half of the 1990s seem trivial compared to our new common interests. If Putin were to cooperate with the United States and its allies in this campaign against terrorism, the lingering legacies of the cold war might be overcome. If Putin continues to listen to those espousing Soviet geostrategic thinking, Russia may miss its chance for Western integration.

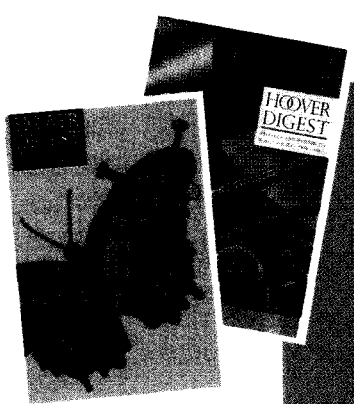
President Bush can help Putin make the right decision by reminding Putin of a bitter fact—Russia cannot become a full member of the Western community of states unless Russia consolidates democracy at home. As the Bush team embarks on a protracted conflict with a worldwide foe, it will be tempted to sidestep hard questions of those who go along. This would be a mistake. Russia will never be an all-around partner of the United States and the West unless democratization proceeds. Backsliding could pit this strategically vital country against the United States once again.

To encourage democratization in Russia and cooperation in our battle against terrorism, Bush has to offer a positive agenda. In affirming the importance of democratic consolidation as a prerequisite for integration, Bush can lead other countries into making integration an attainable goal by pushing for Russian membership in the World Trade Organization, lowering trade barriers to Russian imports, and relaxing travel restrictions. More boldly, Bush could outline the concrete stages for future Russian membership in NATO.

The recent attack on American soil has focused our mind on the real threats to our security—Russia need not be one of them. On the contrary, these tragic events underscore just how close our countries have become. The Russian people already have made this realization. They, like us, are waiting for the Russian government to do the same.

— Michael McFaul

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University



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told me, "This guy doesn't know what he's talking about." When I approached Frank Vogel, Harvard's Islamic law specialist, he said, "Forte produces some useful synthetic essays." Then, after reading Forte's analysis of bin Laden, he was less generous: "His argument is a gross simplification." None of the other top Islam scholars I polled were willing to take their swipes on the record. But off the record they weren't any more charitable. A sampling of the derisive comments: "He's not very well informed" and "I'm afraid it's rubbish."

Indeed, it turns out there are significant problems with Forte's analysis. Consider the role of the Kharijites, whom Forte says serve as Al Qaeda's inspiration. In fact, bin Laden and his Egyptian theorist Ayman Zawahiri rarely, if ever, invoke the Kharijites. (Among contemporary Islamic extremists only the Algerian Groupe Islamique Armé have held up the Kharijites as a model.) Al Qaeda's manifestos more frequently filch from the teachings of the thirteenth-century puritanical jurist Ibn Taymiyyah, who, as it happens, despised Kharijism.

Forte also ignores the influence of Wahhabism, one of modern Islam's central movements. Emerging in eighteenth-century Arabia, Wahhabism called for a new asceticism, violently opposing decorations in Mosques and celebrations of the prophet's birthday. And it has at times sanctioned violence against "infidels," both outside the religion and within. For decades the Saudi royal family has aggressively promoted Wahhabism by, among other things, financing Wahhabi religious schools throughout the Muslim world. Bin Laden was born Wahhabi, and the Taliban—who graduated from some of those Saudi-funded Wahhabi schools—have undergone a period of what Olivier Roy, an Islamologist at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, calls "Wahhabisation." (Witness their destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha, in keeping with Wahhabi prohibitions against graven images.) You can even see traces of the sect's influence in hijacker Mohammed Atta's will, which requests Wahhabi burial rites. But you wouldn't pick up any of this from Forte, who never mentions Wahhabism in his analyses. As Deeb told me, "He misses the real story."

Perhaps that's because, unlike the Kharijites, Wahhabis aren't marginal. Within the United States, according to Hisham al-Kabbani, head of the Washington-based Islamic Supreme Counsel, almost 80 percent of mosques are presided over by Wahhabi Imams. The vast majority of them, of course, don't support bin Laden. But understanding Al Qaeda's Wahhabi roots exposes the simplicity of Forte's distinctions between good and bad, or real and fake, fundamentalist Islam.

But Forte isn't the only one with a deep desire to acquit religious orthodoxy of any bad deeds. The president wants to as well, which is why he has parroted Forte's arguments. Liberals, who often assume that evangelicals disdain other religions, have been surprised at Bush's Islamophilia since September 11. At nearly every turn the president utters homilies like "Islam is peace." He brags about his copy of the Koran, a gift from the Imam Muzammil H. Siddiqi. Speaking off the cuff at the Washington Islamic Center on September 17, he even posed as a Koranic exegete: "The English translation is not as eloquent as the original Arabic, but let me quote from the Koran itself..."

But this isn't surprising at all. Ecumenicism is a hallmark of Bush's brand of evangelicalism and of his political program. His faith-based initiative called for a popular religious front—"churches and mosques and synagogues ... that warm the cold to life"—against social decay. During the campaign, W.'s speeches trumpeted "the transforming power of faith," laying bare one of his first principles: Believers, no matter their denomination, are better people than nonbelievers. That's what Forte believes as well. But it is an article of faith—not the basis for a serious and honest exploration of a religious tradition that Americans desperately need to better understand. Of course nobody wants Bush to declare war on Islam, or on the tens of millions who practice it and have no sympathy for Al Qaeda. But if the United States is to win a war on terrorism it needs to understand the enemy—which means acknowledging the extent to which religion influences terrorists and their supporters.

The Hudson Institute's Michael Horowitz, Forte's biggest booster, describes his significance this way: "A lot of people make the statement that being a believer makes you a better man. Most people don't believe it. But Forte helps you say it with conviction." But saying it with conviction doesn't make it any more true. ■

Malual Kon Dispatch

Uncivil

By MICHAEL RUBIN

"ANYONE WHO THINKS Islam is a religion of peace has never been to the Sudan," said the county commissioner in Malual Kon, a small village nestled among farms and swampy grassland about ten miles from the front line of the country's civil war. There, where Christians and animists have spent almost 20 years resisting the Sudanese government's self-declared jihad, political correctness is in short supply. "They teach their children that killing a non-Muslim is a key to paradise," the Christian official explained further. "If you are too weak to kill, then you enslave."

In this corner of southern Sudan, farmers, merchants, rebel soldiers, and priests all expressed condolences for the World Trade Center attacks—even though few had ever seen a building over one story, and none owned a television. Most people listened to the radio reports with disbelief. Not disbelief that the attacks had taken place—after 18 years of nearly constant war the people of the South consider such things a fact of life—but rather disbelief that the U.S. government would seek to bring the Sudanese government into its coalition against terror.

The United States has listed Sudan as a sponsor of terror-

MICHAEL RUBIN, a visiting fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, recently returned from the Sudan.

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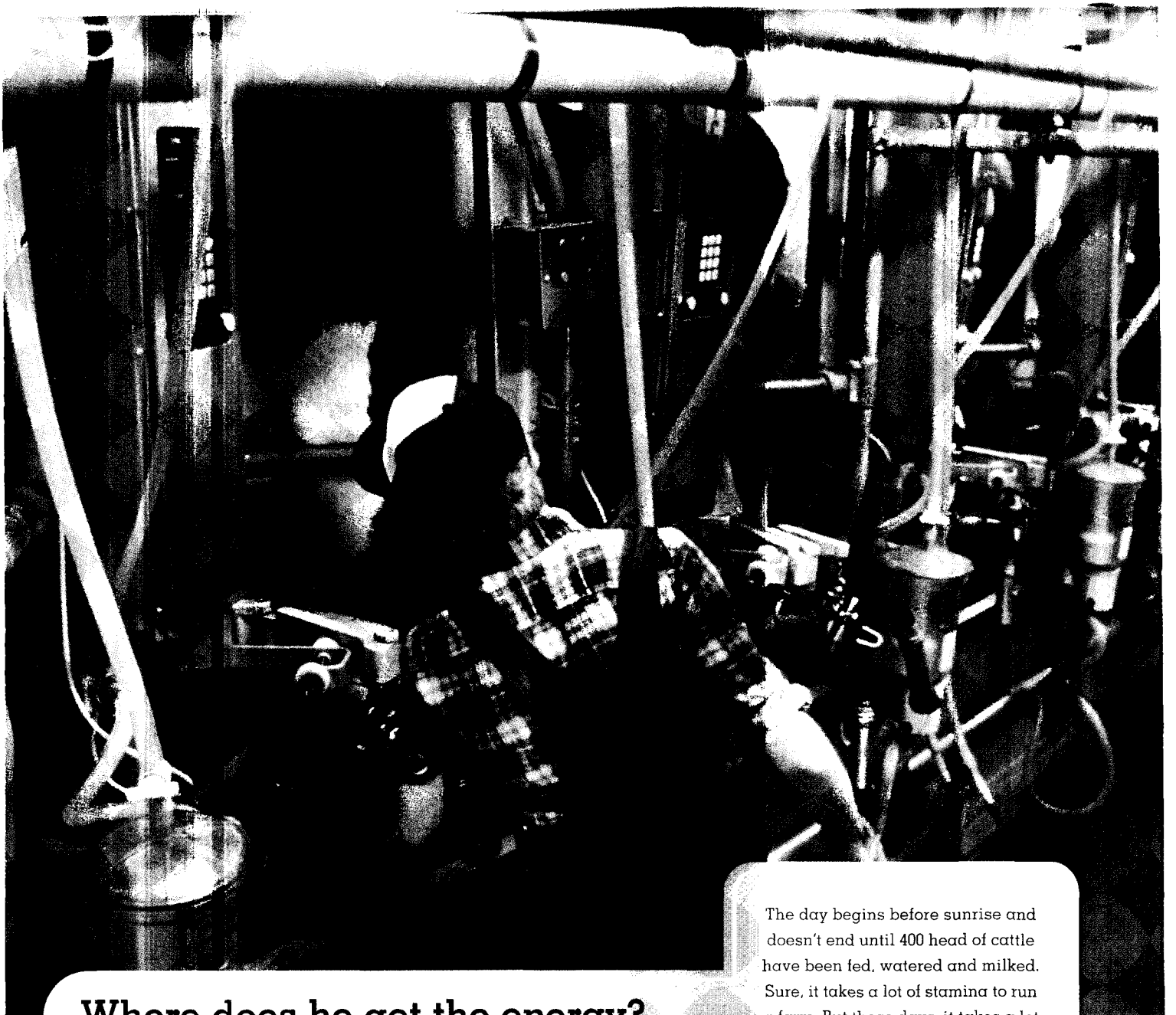

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ism since August 1993. At various times the country has been a safe haven and training center for the Abu Nidal organization, Lebanese Hezbollah, Palestine Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front. It sheltered the assailants who tried to kill Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 1995. In April 1996 the State Department expelled a diplomat from Sudan's UN Mission who had links to conspirators planning to blow up the United Nations and the tunnels under the New York harbor. Osama bin Laden called Sudan home between 1991 and 1996; many of his followers still do. In response to all this the United Nations, in three different 1996 resolutions, slapped sanctions on Khartoum. And in a 1997 Executive Order, President Bill Clinton imposed even tougher commercial and financial penalties.

The United States has also blasted Omar el-Bashir's government for its violent repression and enslavement of Christians and animists at home. In June, after sustained lobbying by Christian and human rights groups, the House of Representatives passed, by a vote of 422 to 2, the Sudan Peace Act. The legislation censured Khartoum for prolonging the civil war—which has cost two million lives and displaced twice that number—and for actively supporting the slave trade, which is conducted largely by militias under the government's command. Under the terms of the act, companies (like Canada's Talisman) that invested in Sudan's oil industry would be banned from U.S. capital markets.

Then came the World Trade Center attacks. And in the diplomatic reshuffling that followed September 11, the Sudanese government has played its cards exceptionally well. Khartoum wasted no time condemning the attacks, issuing a statement reaffirming its "rejection of all kinds of violence." In return Secretary of State Colin Powell said the United States would enlist Sudan in the fight against "all forms of international terrorism." On September 19 the Bush administration quietly killed the Sudan Peace Act. And on September 28 Elfatih Mohammed Erwa, Sudan's ambassador to the United Nations, offered "genuine cooperation in combating terrorism." The same day, the United States abstained as the UN Security Council voted to lift sanctions on Sudan, effectively giving the diplomatic green light to the country's international rehabilitation.

But while Khartoum may have shifted its rhetoric, it does not seem to have changed its behavior. A former high-level government official in Aweil, an important government center in the southern part of the country, told me that last year he saw slave trains passing through town, guarded by the Popular Defense Forces—the decidedly unpopular Sudanese army. And since September 11, Khartoum has neither emancipated its slaves nor chosen to abide by the May 1994 declaration of principles on which the regional states set an agenda for the peace process. (Khartoum objected to affirming the equality of religions under the law.) In sharp contrast, almost two weeks after the World Trade Center fell, the Sudanese government bombed the southern village of Kargoc, a civilian target miles away from the nearest military site. Hearing of the bombing on my first day in the Sudan, I hiked several miles to reach the village. The smell of TNT still lingered in the air; near one cluster of huts was a fresh bomb crater more than six feet deep. A quarter-mile away, another bomb had shredded trees near a church packed with children listening to a Sunday sermon. Lest the government's intentions be misunderstood, on October 4 Sudanese Vice President Ali Osman Taha told a brigade of mujahedin fighters being dispatched to southern Sudan, "The jihad is our way and we will not abandon it and will keep its banner high."

As for whether the Sudan continues to shelter terrorists, it depends whom you ask. U.S. officials told the Associated Press last week that Khartoum has arrested as many as 30 foreign terrorists since the attacks—though given America's lack of diplomatic presence in Sudan, that information is of questionable reliability. In fact, Ibrahim Ahmed Omar, secretary-general of the government's ruling party, essentially contradicted the claim, declaring in a public statement that "[W]e have not handed over anybody to America, because we never have had any terrorist training camps in Sudan." (According to the State Department's *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, released in April 2001, Sudan "continued to be used as a safehaven by members of various groups.... Most groups used Sudan primarily as a secure base for assisting compatriots elsewhere.")

Many ordinary Sudanese laugh at their government's insistence that it harbors no terrorists. Nur, a well-connected Arab merchant recently returned from the capital, described to me in detail a training camp five kilometers from the bus station in Khartoum. The camp, operating under the guise of the African Islamic University (previously the African Islamic Center), reportedly hosts Palestinian, Iraqi, and Iranian "students." Other recent travelers to northern Sudan—many of them Arab businessmen with ties to the Khartoum regime—described Al Qaeda camps in Tokar on the Red Sea and Renk, a large town on the Nile. Several Sudanese also reported the relocation of operatives from larger camps in the North to out-of-the-way towns further south, far from foreign journalists.

And terrorist cells may not be the only things moving south. "If you want to find chemical weapons," one former member of the Sudanese army told me, "just go to the Juba airport." It's a frightening thought. And a plausible one, given that, according to numerous press reports, congressional testimony, and accounts from the field, the Sudanese military has employed chemical weapons against non-Muslims in the Nuba Mountains.

But don't expect the Bush administration to say much about these, or any other allegations of Sudanese misbehavior, any time soon. The administration's anti-terrorism coalition may help in the struggle against bin Laden, but if the Bushies are serious when they vow that the war will not end with Afghanistan, they may eventually find their current efforts more than a little self-defeating. For by allowing terrorism sponsors like Sudan to benefit from the September 11 attacks, the United States signals that sheltering terrorists does indeed pay. This may not be the message Foggy Bottom intends to send—but it appears to be the one that's being received in Khartoum. ■

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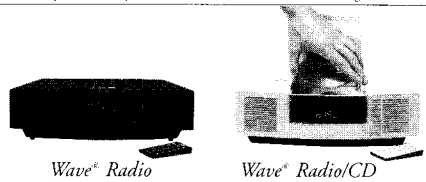

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Why Riyadh stiffs America.

Deserted

By JOSHUA TEITELBAUM

WHEN AMERICAN AND British bombs began falling on Kabul and Kandahar the night of October 7, Iraq's response was predictable. "Every true believer denounces this action," declared Saddam Hussein. Iran was similarly displeased: "This attack which would result in the loss of life among civilians, and, therefore, they are not acceptable," explained the Foreign Ministry. And in Egypt 20,000 student demonstrators put it even more succinctly: "U.S. go to hell." Fortunately America's longtime ally Saudi Arabia, with whom it fought a war ten years ago, rushed to its defense—with absolute silence.

Needless to say this was not what most Americans expected. But that's because most Americans haven't been paying close attention to the shift in Riyadh over the last decade. Since Colin Powell and Dick Cheney cobbled together their last international coalition, Saudi Arabia's role in the Islamic world has changed, and so has Islam's role within Saudi Arabia. And, as a result, the partner that depended on the United States to remove an expansionist Saddam from its doorstep ten years ago is unlikely to be much help in America's hour of need.

The first thing that has changed for Saudi Arabia since the Gulf war is its relationship with its Muslim neighbors. In 1990 the hostility between Tehran and Riyadh that began with Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution had still not abated. The two governments insulted each other almost daily, clashes had broken out between Iranians and Saudis during the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, and there were no direct flights between the two countries. Between 1980 and 1988, the Saudis even aided Saddam's war against Tehran. And so Saddam's subsequent invasion of Kuwait not only posed a military threat to the Saudis, but it was also seen as a terrible betrayal. With its former ally suddenly menacing its border, Saudi Arabia was desperate for help. King Fahd, the Saudi ruler, was personally inclined toward the United States, regularly vacationing in the West and presiding over large arms purchases from America. And so, finding itself at odds with both Iran and Iraq—the two other most powerful states in the region—Riyadh called in the Yanks.

Since then, however, Saudi Arabia's position in the neighborhood has improved. While Saddam remains in power, he now poses no immediate threat to the Saudis, thanks to his defeat in the Gulf war and the U.S. military's ongoing intervention in Iraq. Meanwhile the Saudi leadership has changed—and with it the kingdom's relationship to Iran. In 1995 a stroke debilitated Fahd, and his half brother, Crown Prince Abdullah, essentially took charge of the kingdom. Abdullah, who is less comfortable among non-Muslims and does not vacation outside the Arab world, has a decidedly less pro-Western perspective. And, almost immediately, that included an aggressive effort to repair relations with Iran.

This rapprochement occurred over the objections of the U.S. government, and its implications became clear after the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers in Dhahran, which housed U.S. Air Force personnel. Both the Saudis and the United States are convinced that Saudi Shi'is, operating with the support of people in the Iranian government, carried out the bombing, which killed 19 American servicemen. In June of this year a federal grand jury in Alexandria, Virginia, returned indictments against 13 members of Saudi Hezbollah, whom it said had been "inspired, supported and directed by elements of the Iranian government." But rather than assist the United States in its investigation of the bombing, Saudi officials stonewalled, decrying the Khobar Towers indictments as interference in their internal affairs. This severely hampered the U.S. investigation, FBI officials complained. But Abdullah had made his choice: With the United States unable or unwilling to take out Saddam, he deemed it wiser to balance power in the Gulf by repairing relations with Tehran, even at America's expense.

BUT IF CHANGES in Saudi Arabia's external politics have contributed to the country's anti-American tilt, they have been secondary to changes in its *internal* politics. The presence of American troops in the kingdom following the Gulf war has sparked the largest Islamic opposition movement in Saudi Arabia since the late 1920s. And, in the eyes of the Saudi regime, this movement constitutes a far greater danger than external threats such as terrorism or Saddam.

Islamic opposition movements are common throughout the Muslim world, from Algeria to Uzbekistan. But they present a particular problem for Saudi Arabia since it is the only Arab state whose legitimacy is explicitly linked to its claim to serve Islam. The link dates to an eighteenth-century alliance between the Saudi family and a Muslim reformer (we would now call him a radical Islamist) named Mohammad bin Abd al-Wahhab. The Saudi family agreed to enforce bin Abd al-Wahhab's austere form of Islam, and the cleric and his successors lent their support to the expansion of the Saudi state.

Since the Saudi family purports to rule in the name of Islam, it has throughout its history sought the approbation of the Wahhabi clerics. (It is as if the Bush family had been designated by Billy Graham to rule the United States in order to further Christianity, and based its legitimacy on this mandate rather than a popular vote.) In the 1920s the founder of the modern kingdom, Ibn Saud, needed the clerics' approval to suppress a rebellion by his own fanatic followers, the Ikhwan. When radio was first introduced in the late 1920s, Ibn Saud had to show the clerics that one could broadcast the Koran

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before they would approve it. When a band of fanatics took over Mecca's Grand Mosque in November 1979, King Khalid needed clerical backing before he sent troops in after them. And when Fahd took power in 1982, he sought to increase his Islamic authority by according himself the title "Servant of the Two Holy Places" (i.e., Mecca and Medina). In return for these pledges of allegiance to Islam, the Wahhabi clerics have supported the Saudi royal family, publicly describing them as good Muslims (despite reports of behavior unbecoming to Muslims, such as drinking alcohol) and declaring that dissent against the regime constitutes dissent against Islam. (The clerics' loyalty has, in turn, been rewarded with jobs, prestige, and financial compensation.)

In 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait and threatened the Saudi state, King Fahd once again turned to the Wahhabi clerics for approbation—this time to allow American-led Christian troops to defend the kingdom. (For devout Wahhabi Muslims, Christian and Jewish unbelievers, or *kuffar*, must be kept off Islamic holy land.) Faced with so immediate a threat, Saudi Arabia's clerical establishment grudgingly gave its blessing. But although the threat was quickly removed, the American troops were not. This extended *kuffar* presence roused the ire of Islamic fundamentalists. At first they simply condemned the U.S. troops. But they quickly turned on the regime—accusing it of corruption, nepotism, and a lack of commitment to Islam. And there were also signs that establishment clerics were beginning to support the agenda of the opposition. The result in 1994 was a series of anti-government demonstrations (far from a normal occurrence in Saudi Arabia) and the eventual jailing of opposition clerics. One of them, Safar al-Hawali, declared before his 1994 arrest, "The real enemy is not Iraq. It is the West."

As he has with Iran, Crown Prince Abdullah has responded to this internal threat by appeasing it—making peace with the Islamic radicals at the expense of Saudi Arabia's relationship with the United States. A sustained crackdown on radical Islamists, such as Hosni Mubarak carried out in Egypt, would have been dangerous for a regime so reliant on clerical authority for its legitimacy. And so, in 1999, Abdullah reached an accommodation with the opposition and released the imprisoned clerics. (Although it has never been publicized, it appears that in return they agreed not to openly criticize the royal family.) Moreover, in contrast to King Fahd, Abdullah has worked hard to project the image of a pious Muslim (which he may in fact be) who puts Muslim and Arab relationships before Riyadh's more distant one with the United States. The strategy has worked: Opposition activity has dramatically decreased since the early 1990s. And Abdullah does not want to do anything to bring it back.

Abdullah's rapprochement with his country's Islamic militants is particularly injurious to America's hunt for Osama bin Laden. There is no love for bin Laden—who would like to see the monarchy overthrown—in the House of Saud. But bin Laden's brand of Wahhabism, while far more militant than Abdullah's, is nonetheless closely related. And the Saudi-born bin Laden's primary grievance against the United States is the same as that of the Saudi opposition—the continued presence of American troops in Islamic holy land. All of which means that publicly joining an American-led war against bin Laden could destabilize the delicate political-theological truce that Abdullah has labored to construct.

DOUG FRASER

The Saudis' ambivalence about bin Laden has been evident for years. Although stripped of his citizenship in 1994, he continues to receive funds from wealthy Saudis. And, as with Iranian connections to the Khobar Towers bombing, the Saudis have been reluctant to aid the United States in investigating bin Laden's terrorist acts. Following the November 1995 bombing of the U.S. mission to the Saudi National Guard in Riyadh that killed five Americans, four Saudis claiming to have acted under bin Laden's influence were arrested. But the United States was able to learn from them only what they said in their brief, televised confessions; despite American requests the suspects were beheaded before the FBI could question them.

According to a recent article in *The Washington Post*, Saudi intransigence also derailed an effort to arrest bin Laden beginning in

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March 1996. The government of Sudan, where bin Laden was residing at the time, had reportedly contacted the Clinton administration with an offer to arrest bin Laden and place him in Saudi custody. But despite American entreaties the Saudis declined, and when bin Laden was expelled from Sudan in May, he made it to safety in Afghanistan.

And it wasn't the first time the Saudis had declined an opportunity to capture a terrorist badly wanted by the United States. In April 1995 the FBI received word that Imad Mughniyah, a Hezbollah operative (who has reportedly met with bin Laden associates in the recent past) was on a flight from Khartoum to Beirut, with a scheduled stopover in Jeddah. The United States asked the Saudis to hold Mughniyah—who was responsible for the hijacking of TWA Flight 847 in 1985, during which a U.S. Navy diver was killed, as well as for the bombing of the Marines barracks in Beirut in 1983, which killed 241. FBI agents rushed to Jeddah, where they hoped to pick up their man. But instead of cooperating, the Saudis simply prevented the plane from landing on their soil. Then-Secretary of Defense William Perry summed up U.S. government sentiment at the time: "I cannot express ... how disappointed and how unhappy I am with that result."

As the war against anti-American terrorism heats up, the United States should anticipate more such disappointments. For a decade America has considered its difficulties with the Saudi government to be occasional lapses in an otherwise solid relationship. But the truth is that the relationship between the two nations was never that solid to begin with. After all, the Wahhabist Saudi government—certainly the most conservative Islamic government this side of the Taliban—may have more in common culturally and politically with America's foes in the current fight than it has with America. Thanks to the decline of external threats to the Saudi regime and the rise of internal Islamist dissent, Saudi Arabia's long-standing alliance with the United States has increasingly been revealed as a marriage of convenience. And it is growing less convenient for the Saudis all the time. ■

When America liked the Taliban.

Hope in the Unseen

By Benjamin Soskis

On September 27, 1996, in a storm of dust and pickup trucks, the Taliban swept into Kabul, the culmination of an 18-month campaign for the city. And perhaps even more than the pro-government mujahedin fighters, who had retreated under cover of darkness the night before, the Clinton administration was caught off guard. Few U.S. officials had considered the Taliban capable of such a rapid and overwhelming victory, and those who did were largely ignored. A little over a week earlier the State Department official in charge of Afghanistan had drafted a memo suggesting that a Taliban takeover of Kabul was likely; it did not reach Secretary of State Warren Christopher in time.

So the Clinton administration scrambled to respond. Within a few days the State Department announced that they would send an envoy to meet with the Taliban to consider the establishment of diplomatic relations. Answering a question about the Taliban's dubious human rights record, especially their treatment of women, a State Department spokesman declared that the United States saw "nothing objectionable" in their strict application of Islamic law and suggested that there was "an indication ... that they intend to respect the rights of all their citizens." Responding to a report that the Taliban had apprehended Afghanistan's former Communist president, castrated him, and hung him—along with his brother—on a Kabul traffic post, the spokesman called the action "regrettable." (A few days later the State Department condemned the killing.)

There would be, of course, many more reasons for the United States to regret the Taliban's consolidation of power. But America's faith in the regime's reformability proved surprisingly resilient. While the United States never formally recognized the Taliban as Afghanistan's legitimate government, it made no concerted effort to oust them. Unlike Iran and Russia, the United States offered little assistance to the Northern Alliance, which was trying to overthrow the Taliban from within. Nor, until relatively late in Bill Clinton's second term, did the United States pressure Pakistan, the Taliban's primary external sponsor, to withdraw its support.

Why did the United States tolerate a regime whose abhorrence seems, in retrospect, blindingly obvious? One generous answer is lack of reliable, on-the-ground intelligence about the Taliban. Another is hope—the United States wanted to believe the best about Afghanistan's new rulers, even when the evidence suggested something very different. But to a large extent, ignorance and hope were covers for a deeper motivation: convenience. Believing in the Taliban avoided a conflict with Pakistan, which the United States considered a key player in the region. It afforded potential economic opportunities—chief among them an oil pipeline project. Most importantly it meant the United States didn't have to devote diplomatic, financial, or military resources to a messy political situation in a far-off land. After all, what was the Taliban going to do to us?

The starting point for U.S. policy vis-à-vis the Taliban was not so much support for the regime as support for *any* group that would unify the country after years of bloody civil war. As one U.S. official told the *Los Angeles Times* in October, mere weeks after the Taliban victory, "We're not choosing. These people walked into Kabul, and they are no more or less legitimate than those sitting there last week."

But, of course, it wasn't self-evident that unified Taliban rule was preferable to civil war, and so the United States had to make a case for *Pax Talibana*. By November the State Department was calling for other nations to "engage with"

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the Taliban—but not necessarily recognize them—in the hope of moderating the regime's fundamentalism. And many in U.S. policy circles were considerably more optimistic than that. Bolstered by credible reports that the Taliban were cracking down on the rape, pillaging, and general criminality that characterized their predecessors, American officials argued that, as far as the Afghan people were concerned, life under the Taliban could hardly be worse—and might well be better. In this sense the Taliban's extreme fundamentalism actually worked to the group's favor, since it lent the regime the aura of virtuous religiosity. As Ahmed Rashid writes in *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, "Some U.S. diplomats saw [the Taliban] as messianic do-gooders—like born-again Christians." As then-Colorado Senator Hank Brown said in September 1996, "These fellows are deeply religious and strongly anti-Soviet."

Some U.S. diplomats described the Taliban as almost quaintly amicable. "You get to know them and you find they really have a great sense of humor," one State Department staffer told journalist Richard Mackenzie a few months before the Taliban entered Kabul. Others even managed to find in the Taliban a streak of cosmopolitanism: In one December 1996 briefing, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Robin Raphel made sure to mention that the Taliban were composed of "intelligentsia" and "former civil servants," among other seemingly reformed elements.

These were, to say the least, counterintuitive descriptions of a military movement composed chiefly of poor students from religious schools in western Pakistan peddling a dour, ultrarepressive vision of Islamic law. And yet the Taliban quickly figured out what the United States wanted to hear. At a news conference after their takeover of Kabul, a Taliban representative claimed the movement desired "friendly and good" relations with Washington, would crack down on the illegal drug trade, and would not export radical Islam. If the Taliban found terrorists, the Taliban declared, "we will punish them hard."

BUT WASHINGTON SHOULD have known better. At the very moment the Taliban were distancing themselves from international terrorism, they were reportedly accepting money from and sheltering Osama bin Laden—a man whom the U.S. State Department had, just a few months earlier, identified as "one of the most significant financial sponsors of Islamic extremist activities in the world." Meanwhile, journalists familiar with the regime were warning that the peaceable rhetoric was a sham: "They're expansionist," one reporter who had extensive contacts with the Taliban told *The Economist* that October. "They often talk of their desire to spread their beliefs to Pakistan, Central Asia, the Middle East." And, of course, there was the testimony from the Taliban's opponents. Says Harun Amin, Washington spokesman for the Northern Alliance, "At the time ... I told them that the Taliban are not going to change; it's not in their nature, it's not in their beliefs, it's not in their tenets to change."

And the Taliban quickly proved such predictions correct. Previously the movement had hinted that its restrictions on women—on everything from attending school to leaving home without a male escort—were temporary and meant for the women's safety. But within one month of their victory in Kabul, the regime was adding new ones—like a prohibition on women using public bathhouses.

Nor did the Taliban ever show the sort of regard for international norms that could have intimated their eventual submission to them; on entering Kabul, the Taliban had dragged the former president from a UN compound, where he had been granted shelter for the past few years. Soon after, senior U.S. officials claimed that U.S. policy in Afghanistan was based on establishing "a broad coalition government." Yet the Taliban refused to participate in the convocation of all of the country's feuding ethnic groups—what the Afghans called the *loya jirga*. All its mujahedin opponents, the Taliban insisted, were corrupt and criminal. Says Julie Sirrs, a former Defense Intelligence Agency agent who specialized in Afghanistan, "There were some bad signs from pretty early on ... that I think were just ignored because we had larger geopolitical reasons that we wanted to believe that they would be a good group."

Among those reasons was Pakistan. U.S. officials hoped our old cold war ally would balance Iranian and Russian influence in the region. And to some extent it did. But in the process Islamabad clouded Washington's appreciation of the Taliban's odiousness.

Pakistan had its own reasons for wanting the Taliban to succeed—among others a hope that Islamic radicalism would keep Afghan nationalism in check, thus defusing potential border disputes between the two countries. During Afghanistan's civil war, Pakistan had reportedly provided the Taliban with crucial artillery support and opened its borders so armed Afghan refugees and Pakistani students could replenish depleted Taliban troops. And once the Taliban secured control of the capital, Pakistan did everything it could to encourage the United States to recognize their rule. For example, as Rashid writes, after the fall of Kabul, Pakistani officials told journalists that the United States supported the Taliban—even though U.S. officials insisted otherwise. Throughout the early '90s, when a CIA case officer repeatedly asked permission to contact the Northern Alliance, the group that now represents the largest opposition to the Taliban, the Agency denied his request. As Reuel Gerecht recently wrote in *Middle East Quarterly*, "The Pakistanis loathed [Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Massud] and no one wanted to irritate the Pakistanis." And, according to Gerecht, even when U.S. officials finally agreed to meet with Massud in 1998, it was largely to encourage him to reconcile with the Taliban.

Remarkably America kept deferring to Islamabad even after the Taliban began providing refuge to bin Laden in late 1996. As a December 1996 report on Afghanistan from the Congressional Research Service declared, "[t]he United States is unwilling to isolate [the] Taliban because Pakistan, on which the United States has consistently relied to protect U.S. interests in Afghanistan, supports the group."

Another major incentive for condoning the Taliban was the prospect of an oil pipeline stretching through Afghanistan—a pipeline that would tap the vast resources of the Caspian region while bypassing Iran. Industry experts

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believed the pipeline—being pushed by a U.S.-Saudi consortium led by the California-based UNOCAL—could begin pumping one million barrels of oil a day, a number that could grow to five million in a few years. UNOCAL representatives courted the Taliban assiduously, hiring a bevy of consultants, including Robert Oakley, a former ambassador to Pakistan; Zalmay Khalilzad, now President George W. Bush's adviser on Southwest Asia on the National Security Council; and Henry Kissinger. In addition, according to Richard Mackenzie, UNOCAL received regular briefings from the CIA (the company has disputed this). UNOCAL officials believed that if the Taliban could consolidate power, they could provide a sufficiently stable environment to begin laying down the pipeline.

And so one UNOCAL official told Reuters that the Taliban's takeover of Kabul was a "very positive" development, which could lead to "stability and international recognition." (Soon after UNOCAL backtracked, claiming it was "fanatically neutral when it comes to politics.") The Clinton administration took a similar line. In April 1996 Assistant Secretary of State Raphel told reporters that a primary reason for the United States to promote "political stability" (in other words, to accede to the Taliban's military campaign) was to preserve "economic opportunities" in the region. She stressed that a pipeline could bring much-needed jobs to the blighted country.

In the end, of course, the pipeline was never built and America gradually admitted to itself the truth about the Taliban. In November 1997 Madeleine Albright, during a visit to Pakistan, called the regime's treatment of women "despicable" and condemned "their general lack of respect for human dignity." President Clinton also got tougher, in part because the Taliban's mistreatment of women had become an important issue to many American feminists, including the first lady. But by then the Taliban had consolidated their rule and pushed their opponents to the fringes of the country.

How much has America learned from its disastrous faith in the Taliban? We shall soon find out. As Rashid has explained, during the '90s the United States faced an important choice: follow Pakistan's lead and look for the Taliban to deliver a "temporary Afghan consensus" through a successful military conquest, or bypass the Taliban and seek to form a broad-based government by "bring[ing] the Afghan ethnic groups and factions together." The United States chose the former, mostly because it seemed to require less work—an assessment that proved tragically wrong.

In a sense we face a similar choice today. And, to its credit, the Bush administration has opened a dialogue with the Northern Alliance and Afghanistan's deposed king, among others, about what a post-Taliban regime might look like. But the White House has also eschewed "nation-building" and has been reluctant to wield too heavy a hand in seeking to shape the contours of that new regime. As Barnett Rubin, perhaps the leading American expert on Afghanistan, told ABC News last week, "The attacks having taken place, it's now even more incumbent on the U.S. to do the political work to follow up on what really will turn out to be a mainly political task." We did not do that work when the Taliban entered Kabul. Let's hope we do it now that we seem prepared to make them leave. ■

When to coddle bad regimes.

Cost Benefits

By LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

THE COLD WAR is back in vogue. For a month now, politicians and commentators have been analogizing the newly declared war on terror to America's 40-year war against communism. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, for one, says, "This campaign will be waged much like the cold war, in the sense that it will involve many fronts over a period of time." But the parallel extends beyond similarities of scope and duration. The war on terror has also revived a thorny dilemma about unsavory allies: whether America can fight alongside them without betraying its creed.

The human rights establishment says it cannot. Tom Malinowski, Washington advocacy director of Human Rights Watch, recently complained that "[t]he United States will condone actions committed in the name of anti-terrorism that it would have condemned just two weeks ago." He's right. And, if the United States intends to win the war on terror, it has no choice. But that doesn't mean it has no *choices*. Indeed the Bush team has already found itself entertaining moral trade-offs—with Central Asian dictators who repress their subjects but offer U.S. forces access to the Afghan border; with Saudi Arabia and Egypt, whose corrupt and brutal regimes nonetheless favor the United States more than do their populations; and with Sudan, Iran, and Syria, who offer, well, absolutely nothing. The first two trade-offs make strategic and moral sense. The third makes none.

Human Rights Watch can't comprehend why the United States would make common cause with Uzbekistan, which boasts an "already abysmal human rights record." But Uzbekistan abuts Afghanistan and, as such, has a critical role to play in the U.S. war effort. In the name of proximity, too, the White House has all but announced it will turn a blind eye to Russia's war in Chechnya. Returning the favor, Moscow blessed the decision by its former republics to let the United States use their bases and airspace. Similarly the administration has lifted sanctions against Pakistan, cozied up to dictator Pervez Musharraf, and pledged financial aid to Islamabad. Neatly summarizing the logic of these trade-offs, a senior administration official asks, "Would you rather we launch air strikes from Scandinavia?"

Cynical? Absolutely. But in self-defense against a colossal evil, cynical calculations are justified. Alas, organizations like Human Rights Watch have always lent far more weight to the morality of means than to the morality of outcomes. (What really impressed Human Rights Watch about U.S. air strikes to halt Serb depredations in Kosovo was that the targets were "disproportionate and should be found violations of international humanitarian law.") But there's a distinction between noble intentions and noble consequences. And the

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consequences of alienating the nations bordering Afghanistan would be anything but noble: It would, in fact, mean forfeiting our capacity to rid the region of an evil far greater than anything the tin-pot dictators of Pakistan and Uzbekistan have contemplated.

If the crisis has forced the United States into alliances with helpful human rights abusers, it's also compelled us to stand by repressive regimes that have not, in turn, stood by us. Saudi Arabia has refused to permit the launching of U.S. air strikes from its soil, and Riyadh and Cairo have uttered barely a peep in support of the war effort (though the Bush team claims that Egypt has shared intelligence, and that privately, the Saudis' chief concern is that the United States won't prosecute the war with sufficient vigor).

Rather, our continued support of these governments derives from a candid acknowledgment of what would replace them if we did not. For all their defects, unlike, say, Iran or Afghanistan, neither has enshrined the export of terror in official policy. Both, however, find themselves under siege by forces that, once in power, would do exactly that. "This really isn't the time to complain about repression [in Saudi Arabia and Egypt]," says a senior administration official. "Anyway, our complaint isn't that they've been dealing too harshly with [fundamentalists]. They're not doing enough." Put another way, repression in the Arab world may be one of many "root causes" of terrorism; but for now, at least, it's also part of the solution. And, as this official points out, to pretend otherwise would be to repeat the mistake of the Carter years—when ill-timed American pressure merely encouraged the replacement of friendly autocrats with unfriendly ones.

In some instances, however, the Bush team has taken the trade-offs too far. Thus the administration has abandoned its opposition to lifting UN sanctions on Sudan and pressured congressional leaders to discard legislation imposing new penalties on Khartoum. Foggy Bottom has also sought, unsuccessfully, to entice Iran into its anti-bin Laden coalition. State Department officials, including Colin Powell, have mused as well about enlisting Syria, even though the latest terrorism report by the very same State Department concludes that Damascus continues "to provide safehaven and support to several terrorist groups." And last week Foggy Bottom pointedly declined to object to Syria's ascension to a two-year perch on the UN Security Council and infuriated Pentagon officials by pushing to omit Syrian-sponsored terror groups from an executive order citing terrorist organizations with global reach.

If it's true that during wartime the United States takes its allies where it can find them, it's equally true that it usually doesn't take them when they're on the other side. But that's exactly what the State Department—and, specifically, the Bureau of Near East Affairs and the Policy Planning staff, according to a senior administration official—counsels today. This isn't dictatorships and double standards; it's dictatorships and no standards. To begin with, none of these countries has responded in kind to American blandishments—which is just as well. In the name of tactical advantage, such an alliance virtually ensures that the broader war against terror will fail. That's because, by embracing as coalition partners states that actively support terror, the United States surrenders the ability to punish them later if the terror trail leads back to their borders. But, of course, for the State Department, that's the whole point. "Keep in mind," says a member of the Bush team, "[the State Department] doesn't want this thing going any further than Afghanistan."

Navigating these dilemmas isn't really so complicated. If a trade-off compromises the war on terror, as would cooperation with Iran, Sudan, and Syria, it's not worth making. But if it furthers that war, as does U.S. cooperation with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan's neighbors, it is. After all, a defeat for the world's most powerful force for decency means, ipso facto, a defeat for the cause of human rights as well. Do trade-offs in the war on terror carry moral costs? Absolutely. But so does losing. ■

On the Hill

Rhetorical Question

By MICHAEL CROWLEY

IT'S A BRIGHT early October morning on Capitol Hill. Joe Biden is bounding up the steps of the Russell Senate Office Building, wearing his trademark grin. As he makes for the door, he is met by a group of airline pilots and flight attendants looking vaguely heroic in their navy-blue uniforms and wing-shaped pins. A blandly handsome man in a pilot's cap steps forward and asks Biden to help pass emergency benefits for laid-off airline workers. Biden nods as the men and women cluster around him with fawning smiles. Then he speaks. "I hope you will support my work on Amtrak as much as I have supported you," he begins. (Biden rides Amtrak to work every day and is obsessed with the railroad.) "If not, I will *screw you badly*."

A dozen faces fall in unison as Biden lectures on. "You've not been good to me. You're also damn selfish. You better listen to me..." It goes on like this for a couple of minutes. Strangely, Biden keeps grinning—even fraternally slapping the stunned man's shoulder a couple of times. When we finally head into the building, Biden's communications director, Norm Kurz, turns to me. "What you just witnessed

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is classic Senator Biden."

Meet the current chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and the Democratic Party's de facto spokesman on the war against terrorism. No other Democrat has been as visible in the weeks since September 11, and Biden, who began promoting himself almost immediately after the attacks, is likely to speak, for the foreseeable future, for a party lacking in foreign policy experts. That's good news for a man who is thinking seriously about running for president in 2004. But is it good for the Democratic Party? Biden is tough and he's an internationalist. Unfortunately he's also legendary for speaking impulsively and leaving others to clean up the mess. "He lacks the filter," says one Democratic strategist. Or as a senior Senate foreign policy aide put it: "[Biden] is an unguided missile." Not exactly the persona you want out front when the country is at war.

IT'S LATE AFTERNOON, and Biden sits at a conference table with Kurz in his hideaway office near the Senate floor. He cracks open a Caffeine-Free Diet Coke as he waits for a Judiciary Committee staffer to help him prepare for a CNN interview on the anti-terrorism bill. Unexpectedly, a call comes in from Attorney General John Ashcroft. Biden picks up the phone and greets Ashcroft like an old Elks lodge buddy. "Hey John, Joe. Howyadoin' pal? What's the sticking points, and [tell me] if I can be helpful." All day, reporters had been buzzing that Ashcroft wanted to cut a deal with a Democrat, perhaps Biden, to circumvent the stubborn Judiciary Committee chairman, Pat Leahy. But Biden won't bite. "I'm happy to help," he tells Ashcroft. "But I don't want to inadvertently become ... a separate negotiation here, kind of thing."

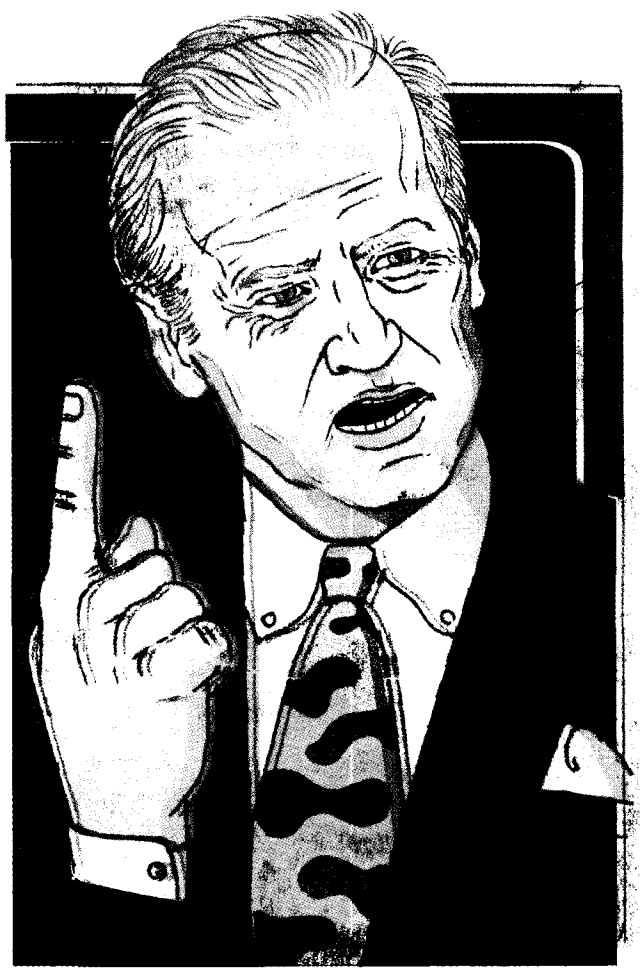
Time is short, however; CNN awaits. Delaware's senior senator has been doing a lot of television lately—from an interview with Peter Jennings in the first hours after the attacks to an appearance on "Larry King Live" the night of the first retaliatory strikes against Afghanistan. Other media beckon. "Are we still getting the daily Larry King, Matthews calls?" Biden asks. "You're getting everybody. Larry King, Matthews, Greta," Kurz replies. It must be heaven for the senator: There is nothing he loves more than a captive audience.

Speech is at once Biden's great strength and his great weakness. As a presidential candidate in 1987 he brought audiences to tears with his stump speeches about reclaiming the lost dream of Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. Then his campaign imploded when he was caught plagiarizing from British Labour Party head Neil Kinnock. On the Senate floor this spring he delivered one of the most powerful Democratic critiques of Bush's tax cut. "This is about values," Biden thundered. "I have never had it so starkly and honestly stated on this floor. What do we value as Americans?" And when Biden spoke before a meeting of Democratic senators shortly after the September 11 attacks, to explain the importance of the use-of-force authorization he had helped craft, he received a standing ovation. Afterward California Senator Barbara Boxer approached Biden to say, "Thank God you're here."

Biden's admirers spin his undisciplined chatter as a kind of John McCain-esque straight talk. Their shining example is the way, in 1992, Biden told Slobodan Milosevic to his face that he was "a damned war criminal and should be tried as one." Washington insiders "like people to speak in this kind of thought-speak where you talk for three minutes and don't say anything," says his former longtime chief of staff, Ted Kaufman. "That's not Joe Biden."

But Biden's mouth does him as much harm as good. "[H]e gives Castro-length speeches," says one exasperated Senate staffer. In Democratic caucus meetings, he is famous for declaring, "I'll be brief," and then talking the room into a stupor. (Biden's colleagues have been known to burst into laughter when he makes that promise.) People who know Biden also warn that his loose talk often reflects muddled thinking. In his classic study of the 1988 presidential candidates, *What It Takes*, Richard Ben Cramer wrote, "Joe often didn't know what he thought until he had to say it." In one recent committee debate, recalls an observer, Biden delivered a rambling explanation of his opposition to a foreign aid amendment, by the end of which he had seemed to talk himself out of his original position.

By straying off-message, Biden doesn't only cause headaches for himself, but occasionally for others as well. When Congress and the Clinton administration were trying to force reforms at the United Nations last year, the United States held up nearly $1 billion in back dues payments as leverage. In a visit to the General Assembly soon afterwards, Biden suggested that America's demands might be negotiable—a position he had not cleared with his Senate colleagues nor with a startled UN Ambassador Richard Holbrooke.



EDEL RODRIGUEZ

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There's also the simple matter of tone. Biden's affable vernacular works well for partisan politics, but not for war and peace. During NATO's bombing campaign of Serbia two years ago, Biden cheerfully declared on CBS that "Slobodan Milosevic is getting the living hell kicked out of him." After implying on Fox News in 1999 that Boris Yeltsin was not "in charge" of Russia, Biden was pressed by host Tony Snow on why the United States continued to deal with him. "Well, you've got to talk to somebody," Biden replied. "My staff talks to me and sometimes I'm not in charge. But all kidding aside..."

Biden himself seems to worry that people aren't taking him seriously. In an odd verbal tic, he routinely interrupts himself to offer the assurance that he's "not being facetious." He opened his May 17 tax cut speech by saying: "I find this the single most fascinating debate I have been involved in in 28 years. I sincerely do. It is not a joke. I am not being facetious." Or when the anti-terrorism bill came up on CNN's "Crossfire" last month: "In full disclosure, I wrote that bill. I'm not being facetious." When "Crossfire" host Bill Press offered Biden the avuncular assurance that "[i]t's really a great bill," Biden pressed on: "No. No. I'm not being facetious. I'm not being facetious when I say that."

THAT EXCHANGE POINTS to another problem with Biden as a party spokesman. Rather than build up the credentials of a party deeply mistrusted by the public on foreign affairs, Biden often seems more interested in advertising his own accomplishments. In the wake of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, Biden did, in fact, champion an anti-terrorism bill similar to the one now before Congress (though it was, as he complains, badly watered down by anti-government conservatives and leftist civil libertarians). And Biden doesn't let you forget it. "I introduced the terrorism bill in '94 that had a lot of these things in it," he bragged to NBC's Tim Russert on September 30. When I spent the day with him later that week, Biden mentioned the legislation to me, and to several other reporters he encountered, no fewer than seven times. "When I was chairman in '94 I introduced a major anti-terrorism bill—*back then*," he says in the morning, flashing a knowing grin and pausing for effect. (Never mind that he's gotten the year wrong.) Back in his office later that afternoon, he brings it up yet again. "I drafted a terrorism bill after the Oklahoma City bombing. And the bill John Ashcroft sent up was my bill." You don't say.

In fact, the only thing Biden likes better than reminding people about his anti-terrorism bill is reminding them that he predicted the September 11 attacks. On September 10 Biden delivered a foreign policy speech to the National Press Club complaining about the administration's fixation on missile defense. "[T]he real threat comes to this country in the hold of a ship, the belly of a plane, or smuggled into a city in the middle of the night in a vial in a backpack," Biden said. So give the man credit. Just not as much as he's been claiming. "[L]iterally as recently as yesterday, I spoke to the National Press Club and talked about the fact it is just as easy to fly from National Airport into the White House as it is to, you know, do the same thing in New York," Biden told ABC News. Unfortunately Biden said no such thing. His speech didn't mention National Airport or the White House—or any kamikaze scenario at all.

"THIS," JOE BIDEN announces, "is what I've spent my entire adult life preparing for." It's exactly three Tuesdays since the September attacks, and Biden is presiding over a morning meeting of his committee staffers. It's a formidable group—a collection of super-earnest twentysomethings and grave committee veterans, all wearing dark suits and grim faces. Biden, with his pearly smile and sugar-white hair, seems almost to glow in contrast.

Just as George W. Bush reportedly believes he was divinely "called" to lead America through this epic conflict, Biden suggests a similar, if less spiritual, conception of his own role. The war on terrorism, he explains, involves a confluence of issues he has spent years working on, first as chairman of the Judiciary Committee from 1987 to 1995, and now on Foreign Relations. Later in the day he explains this confluence to me: "All of a sudden, what're the issues of the day? *Boom!*" Constitutional rights, internationalism, terrorism. "*Bingo!*"

And it's true; Biden is well situated. He was concerned about America's ability to gather information about terrorists years ago, before others recognized it as a major problem. His hawkishness and his humanitarianism—on display during his full-throated support for the U.S. intervention in the Balkans—are the right pedigree for a war in which the United States drops both cluster bombs and packages of food. And he has admirably muted his pre-September ridicule of the administration. In talking points I glimpsed before his September 30 appearance on "Meet the Press," Biden's staff reminded him not to show "daylight" between himself and the administration, or to seem to be "micromanaging" the war strategy. And he didn't.

Still, some Democrats worry that Biden's flapping tongue could cause p.r. problems down the road. "There probably should be some small concern," says the Democratic strategist. Any wrongheaded declaration by Biden "would not be deliberate; it would not be that he stopped being a team player and decided to go out and conduct foreign policy on his own. It would be just that he was out there and talking."

At the Tuesday-morning meeting with committee staffers, Biden launches into a stream-of-consciousness monologue about what his committee should be doing, before he finally admits the obvious: "I'm groping here." Then he hits on an idea: America needs to show the Arab world that we're not bent on its destruction. "Seems to me this would be a good time to send, no strings attached, a check for $200 million to Iran," Biden declares. He surveys the table with raised eyebrows, a *How do ya like that?* look on his face.

The staffers sit in silence. Finally somebody ventures a response: "I think they'd send it back." Then another aide speaks up delicately: "The thing I would worry about is that it would almost look like a publicity stunt." Still another reminds Biden that an Iranian delegation is in Moscow that very day to discuss a $300 million arms deal with Vladimir Putin that the United States has strongly condemned. But Joe Biden is barely listening anymore. He's already moved on to something else. ■

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Neatness Counts

LET US NOW praise famous menus. Or, anyway, the places where they are made and served. Restaurants—especially their kitchens—have been the sites of plays and films for at least half a century, ever since Arnold Wesker's play *The Kitchen* was produced in 1959 and subsequently filmed. True, praise hasn't always been the point; but, even when it wasn't, drama was inherent in a restaurant. A large part of the place is a haven of service, and the rest of it, which produces what is served, is a maelstrom. Side by side they exist, the suaveness and the swirl, and it was inevitable that theater and film realists would eventually pounce on this contrast.

Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* and Stanley Tucci's *Big Night* are only two of the more recent items in this genre. Now comes a neat piece called **Dinner Rush** (Access), written by Brian Kalata and Rick Shaughnessy, and directed by Bob Giraldi, who has done some features and many commercials. The setting is Gigino's, a top-flight Italian restaurant in New York, and one of the neatest aspects of the film is that it treats this restaurant like a theater set on a revolving stage. The front and back of the restaurant are where almost everything takes place. This pattern, which might seem a theater limitation in a film, is here used to intensify cinema.

The owner of the restaurant is played by Danny Aiello, a monarch who has headaches despite his sway. The chef is his son, played by Edoardo Ballerini. The generation gap is symbolized by the son's passion for new cuisine, which seems to have the word "reduction" in the description of every dish, and the father's preference for sausage and peppers. But there are more serious troubles: the son has gambling debts, and two strong-arm types come to collect, as well as to muscle in on the restaurant's profits. Also the film has some sex, although there is a reduction here, too.

The dialogue, zippy and terse, ventures close to the border of reprise, reminding us of similar zip and terseness in the past; but it never quite gets banal. Giraldi's directing gives the picture, visually, a telegraphic compactness. He works in close a lot of the time with a hand-held camera, so that we get surges of immediacy, of pressure, even in the relatively relaxed moments. The single most amazing achievement in the film is what Giraldi has done with the kitchen crew. Whenever a military film is made, we are told that the actors have spent weeks training in military conditions. Where did these kitchen actors train? Who advised? When Giraldi's camera weaves through that kitchen, these men are always interestingly busy.

The ending of the story has some surprises that derive less from the previous realism of the film than from the screenwriters' ingenuity. But, as is often the case with agreeable lightweight pictures, we don't really complain, because we were entertained and we want the package to be neat.

If I were an actor, I would hate Danny Aiello. My actor colleagues and I would have struggled from youth onward to learn our craft, and this Aiello fellow walks into films at the age of forty, having spent his life otherwise, and—bang!—is *there*. He is the kind of personality (Chazz Palminteri is another) for whom the camera seems always to be searching and whom it occasionally finds. Aiello's timing is clean, his readings are true, he is loaded with authenticity. He doesn't have much range, but he is one of those film actors who seem to say, "This is all I have. If you like it, fine. If not, I'll go back to what I was doing before." This very aplomb heightens his appeal.

Ballerini is adequate without being impressive. Polly Draper, as Aiello's girlfriend, makes the affecting most of a small role. Sandra Bernhard, playing an influential food critic who wears a wig apparently in order to be recognized rather than the reverse, does an amusing cartoon. But the center of the film is Giraldi's enjoyment of the contrast between the restaurant's front and back.

I learned very early about traveling salesmen: my grandfather was one. He traveled through the Northeast selling what were called "notions": trimmings for ladies' hats, fancy buttons, and so on. His proudest boast: "Whenever I'm in Buffalo, the chief of police invites me to his home for dinner." When I first saw *Death of a Salesman*, it was in some part a trip down Memory Lane.

And when I saw **Diamond Men** (Panorama), I thought of both my grandfather and Arthur Miller's play. Especially the play. In this film, too, an aging salesman has a health problem and is sassed by a young executive at his firm who really wants him to leave. But this screenplay by Daniel M. Cohen, who also directed, has dilemmas of its own and its own verity.

That aging salesman, Eddie Miller—odd that Cohen should have given him that last name—has been selling diamonds to jewelry shops in Pennsylvania for thirty years. He has a heart attack, but he recovers and wants to go back to work. The young boss tells Eddie that their insurance company will not cover him because of his health problem, and since the job entails carrying around $1 million worth of diamonds, the boss cannot let him continue. A temporary solution is found: the company has hired a young salesman, who can be insured. The new man, Bobby Walker, will travel for a few weeks with Eddie, who will introduce Bobby to the customers and generally break him in. After that, says the boss, we'll see.

The film accompanies Eddie and Bobby on the road as the older man guides the younger one into the chummy histrionics of salesmanship. The two of them don't and do get on together—Eddie likes jazz on the car radio, Bobby listens to rock on a Walkman—but Bobby, for all his coltishness, wants to learn. (Strangely enough, the many scenes in the car reminded me of comparable scenes in recent Iranian films: the car interior has a compressive effect, almost squeezing out truth.) Eddie really has mastered the technique of selling ("When a customer says no, he's asking for a reason to say yes"), and, like Willy Loman, he is well-liked. Bobby, for his part, re-introduces Eddie, a widower, to sex; and sexual adventure leads to the first time that Eddie is robbed in all his diamond-selling life.

Like *Dinner Rush*, Cohen's film is neatly shaped, and like *Dinner Rush*, it has a twisty end that is more a matter of form than of reality. But Cohen, who has been in the diamond business, has directed with a sure, non-wasteful hand and with touching empathy for both men. The picture depends completely on those two performances, and the two actors come through.

Donnie Wahlberg, older brother of Mark, gives Bobby bounce and makes him

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a believable knockout with young women along the way. Bobby's extra energy in his job is a sort of panic—someone not quite sure of himself and anxious not to appear anxious. Robert Forster's performance is even more of a pleasure. Forster has been acting for thirty-five years in theater and film and has had a bumpy time of it. His last notable role was in Tarantino's *Jackie Brown* (1997). Here he gets what is probably the role of his career, and he succeeds completely by not treating it that way. Reticent, contained, aware of the shabbiness of life and the need for pride because of it, Forster's diamond salesman is a gem. ■

Danielpour's up-to-the-minute mediocrity.

The Music of Indigestion

By JEREMY EICHLER

BROWSING IN THE New York Public Library, I stumbled across an old, tattered book, first published in 1928, called *The Dilemma of American Music*. I was immediately plunged into the bilious prose of Daniel Gregory Mason, a turn-of-the-century American composer who seems to have been exceedingly grumpy about the condition of his art. With echoes of the nativism of his day, Mason warned that American music was drowning in influences flooding in from around the world. "Too much passive reception, too little self-realizing activity—that had always been the characteristic danger of our situation.... We became vast stomachs to swallow at one gulp the music of the universe, while our legs and arms, just timidly sprouting, gave up the unequal struggle and withered away. In short, American music from 1914 to 1928 is the Music of Indigestion." There was something unattractive about the tone of this complaint; and yet Mason's conclusion struck awfully close to the bone. So I closed the book and made my way to the checkout desk, thinking of the music of Richard Danielpour.

"Polyglot parrots," Mason called the American composers of his time, and it is an uncannily accurate description of Danielpour and some of his peers. Even more than Mason's colleagues, these composers are awash in the sounds and the styles of a sonically cluttered age. They are drowning in influences, and so they pretend that drowning is swimming. How does one establish an individual compositional voice under such circumstances? The answer, alas, is that often one does not.

Danielpour is not alone in the dilemma that he faces. John Corigliano, Lowell Lieberman, Christopher Rouse, and other composers wage daily battle with this syncretistic rut. They vary in their ability, in their approach, and in their level of success, but, like the minimalists who came before them, they generally reject atonality and the excesses of modernism. They also have in common a desire to reunite concert music with its audience. These are fine sentiments. But to achieve their goals, these composers write broadly tonal music that at its best uses a host of twentieth-century musical styles the way a chef uses spices: a dab of atonality here, a tone cluster there for spooky effect. Basically the music sounds friendly and approachable, and sometimes amazingly like the more vulgar accomplishments of nineteenth-century Romanticism or its spin-offs.

At its worst, the result is—the phrase is Mason's again—a featureless eclecticism. These remarkably derivative compositions are like puzzles that challenge you mainly to identify their various pieces. And yet these are the compositions that purport to be saving classical music from a troubled time. Danielpour's music in particular is worthy of a closer look, since he is among the most prominent of the contemporary pasticheurs. He has an exclusive recording contract with Sony Classical, and his music is regularly commissioned and premiered by major symphony orchestras, including within the last two years the New York Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Orchestra.

But before much sense can be made of Danielpour's answer to the conundrum of classical music in our day, one first must understand the contours of the problem as he inherited it. That story begins with an early American maverick who lived in Mason's day and who, in his music and in his writing, discovered certain things that our own composers seem willfully to have forgotten. I refer, of course, to Charles Ives.

ALTHOUGH HE MADE his living in the insurance business, Ives brought to American music a restless inventiveness that was previously unimaginable. He was an experimenter and a dreamer, building fugues in different keys, using multiple time signatures at once, and exploring semitones long before any of these devices were fashionable in Europe. But Ives's most lasting contribution to American music, and the one that is most repercussive for composers today, was his ability to borrow, to synthesize, and to collage disparate elements in work that had an undeniable aesthetic integrity, work that was uniquely his own. In his Symphony No. 2, a quotation from "America the Beautiful" links to one from a Brahms symphony, hymn tunes nuzzle up to marching-band ditties, allusions to Wagner and Bach intermingle with "Turkey in the Straw." The result is not an amorphous mess, but—owing to Ives's careful choices and forceful musical personality—a unified artistic statement about America and Europe, delivered with a craggy, impish sense of humor.

Among Ives's most important works is the kaleidoscopic Piano Sonata No. 2, "Concord, Mass., 1840–1860," which consists of wildly original sound portraits of Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, and the Alcotts. To go along with this music, Ives penned a series of "Essays Before a Sonata" that includes some of the most quirky but far-thinking writing about the questions facing American music and the aesthetic problems of composition to come along before or since. Ives had an uncanny sense of the conditions that are needed for music to develop. He was no stranger to the way that the public's conservative taste can hamper innovation, not least by couching itself in the language of universal aesthetic judgment. Here, for example, are Ives's thoughts about the idea of beauty, which are particularly germane to Danielpour and his cohort:

> Beauty in music is too often confused with something that lets the ears lie back in an easy chair. Many sounds that we are used to do not bother us, and for that

JEREMY EICHLER writes about music for *Newsday*.

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> reason we are inclined to call them beautiful.... [But] analytical and impersonal tests will show, we believe, that when a new or unfamiliar work is accepted as beautiful on its first hearing, its fundamental quality is one that tends to put the mind to sleep.... If the composer's sincere conception of his art and of its functions and ideals coincides to such an extent with these groove-colored permutations of tried-out progressions in expediency ... has he or has he not been drugged with an overdose of habit-forming sounds? And as a result, do not the muscles of his clientele become flabbier and flabbier until they give way altogether and find refuge only in a seasoned opera box—where they can *see* without thinking?

When he wrote these words in 1919, Ives was addressing not only American listeners but also American composers, some of whom were still slavishly imitating their European counterparts and trying to cherish the late-Romantic flame. But his thoughts could not ring more sharply or more true today, with reference to the highly expedient neo-Romanticism that has been on the rise in our concert halls.

One forward-looking European composer who admired certain aspects of Ives's craft was Arnold Schoenberg. At the time of Ives's "Essays before a Sonata," Schoenberg was promulgating his own revolutionary ideas, and attempting to integrate atonality into a rigorous twelve-tone method of composition. This technique calls for all twelve pitches to be arranged in a predetermined "row" that is then strictly manipulated to form the basis of a piece of music. When Schoenberg finalized it in 1921, he famously claimed that he had "discovered something that will assure the supremacy of German music for the next hundred years." Future audiences would disagree; and many listeners today, implicitly or explicitly, treat the birth of the twelve-tone method as twentieth-century music's fall from grace.

With some notable exceptions, they are mostly right. After the war, twelve-tone composers such as Pierre Boulez and Milton Babbitt forged ahead in their drive to systematize all elements of classical composition, including rhythm, dynamics, and even timbre. This postwar "serialist" avant-garde pushed music even further away from its audience, making the university rather than the concert hall the forum for new music. When this music did show up in public venues, audiences fled in droves. Meanwhile, composers dug in their heels and enforced their tools as an orthodoxy in the academic system. (Just to what extent they mandated the serialist doctrines is the topic of a lingering and lively dispute, but that the serialist regime existed seems beyond question.) In an article titled "Who Cares if You Listen," Babbitt argued that the composer had evolved to the level of a specialist, not unlike the mathematician or the physicist. No layman would expect to be able to drop in on an academic colloquium in physics and understand what was going on, so why should composers be held to a different standard?

What came next—this barest of historical sketches is important to understanding the root problems of Danielpour's style—was the minimalism of La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Philip Glass, and Steve Reich. In the San Francisco Tape Music Center in the late 1960s, and later in the lofts and the galleries of downtown Manhattan, these composers began to raise the portcullis that had fallen on tonality, on subjectivity, on the idea of the audience. Their early hypnotic tape loops and cool, stripped-down arpeggios became a prescriptive statement about the art and its relationship to its listeners: the gulf had grown too large, the music too complex.

This music was certainly listenable, in some instances almost to the point of muzak. But minimalism in itself, for all the sense of renewal that it brought, was limited as an idiom. The minimalists themselves were soon swearing off the term and moving on to new experiments, even if the pieces sounded to the majority of their audiences like more of the same. Still, the landscape had been irrevocably changed, and the pendulum, for better and for worse, began swinging in the other direction—toward the re-inclusion of the listener, and eventually toward outright pandering.

Born in 1956, Richard Danielpour came on the scene after the serialist cartel had been broken, and his music is indebted not to the Second Viennese School and its American disciples, but to an alternate strain of twentieth-century composers who suddenly became central once the serialists stopped writing the history: Stravinsky, Copland, Barber, Britten, and Bernstein. (Another list of influences; but that, again, is the true subject of any discussion of Danielpour and the failure of his kind of American music.) At Juilliard, he studied with the conservative Vincent Persichetti and Peter Mennin.

Over the last ten years, Danielpour has risen steeply to prominence—relative as that may be in the still backwaters of American contemporary music. He has served as composer-in-residence for the Seattle Orchestra and the Pacific Symphony, and he has received commissions from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the San Francisco Symphony, among others. He has also won the respect and the admiration of a range of contemporary performers who praise the flowing melodies and the "spiritual essence" of his music. The late K. Robert Schwarz, writing in *The New York Times*, described him as "classical music's young composer of choice." This last characterization, if it is true, is the most troubling one for what it says about music's contemporary choices. Indeed, what seems to have earned Danielpour his success is the handsome mid-century sheen of his music, so bland that it offends almost no one.

Danielpour's music has essentially two modes, which he has called "public" and "private" and which often appear in tandem in his compositions. The first is brash, busy, declarative, extroverted. It sometimes has a rock-like sense of propulsion, with strutting, syncopated rhythms and ostinatos out of Stravinsky but without the Russian master's grinding power. The public music can be ear-splittingly loud, but the volume frequently translates not into urgency but into bombast. The public mode can also be clangorous, as if we are heading on a bumpy sonic ride toward somewhere unusual. But Danielpour never pursues this line for long. In any one of his pieces, it is seldom more than a few minutes before the lush strings come in to placate the ear with familiar and profound-seeming sounds. This is Danielpour's private mode: syrupy string chorales, shimmering vocal lines, gently floating woodwind solos. Sometimes he will switch modes in quick succession: one of his favorite tricks is to draw the listener into a quiet, plaintive solo line and then blast away with full orchestral booms.

The Georgian composer Giya Kancheli does something similar, but Kancheli's gestures succeed because they are the expressions of a philosophy of life, of a broader mystical sound-universe. No such philosophy and no such universe is apparent in Danielpour. What may be found in his music is a gauzy New Age spirituality, with composition titles such as "The Awakened Heart," "First Light," "Celestial Night," and "Journey Without Distance." This last phrase is the subtitle of Danielpour's Symphony No. 3 (1989), which was inspired by *A Course in Miracles*, the popular self-help book written by the psychiatrist Helen Schucman in the 1970s but dictated, she claimed, by Jesus. This book represented the absolute nadir of the psychologization of American religion. ("All that I give is given to myself.... I want only what belongs to me. God has established

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miracles as my right.... I bless the world because I bless myself....")

The resulting music is, alas, an ideal soundtrack for a course in healing and personal growth, precisely because it avoids weighing down the ears or the mind with subtlety or complexity. Instead, it hews to the standard Danielpour program of moving from darkness to light, from public conflict to private redemption. In his own words, Part I of the symphony "invites us to awaken from the dream of death and our own fearful existence and believe in a world of hope and love." The pastiche that Danielpour uses to depict the journey is itself an apt translation into music of the opportunism of New Age spirituality, its essentially consumerist attitude toward the religious traditions. Pick and choose and mix and meld—in this case, the ghosts of Bernstein, Vaughan Williams, Harris, Diamond, and William Schuman—in a benign demagoguery, all for the purpose of achieving only a strong but passing emotion.

DANIELPOUR'S CELLO CONCERTO (1994), which has been recorded by Yo-Yo Ma, displays some of the same characteristics. The cello writing is capricious and uncontrolled, and the orchestra can be senselessly loud and blusterous. Ma gives the piece as flattering a reading as one could imagine, and yet even he cannot lift it above its stock gestures, its echoes of Bernstein show tunes, its tired vocabulary of concerto clichés. The CD's liner notes reveal a pretentious scenario for the piece that came to Danielpour in a dream, in which an oracle bringing "ill news to a large assembly" is met with "angry accusations" and is sentenced to death.

The composer's most recent release is *Elegies*, written in 1997 for Frederica von Stade and based on the wartime letters of her father, an American lieutenant who was killed in Germany in the line of duty. Its opening is typical "public" Danielpour, vaguely forbidding, with dark bell-like percussion, but this lasts less than a minute before the mezzo-soprano enters over throbbing strings, in florid late-Romantic harmonies. The second movement oozes Shostakovich, with Thomas Hampson's strident baritone careening over a militaristic march. Then the music segues from Shostakovich to Copland, toward the American composer's populist period, as in his *Eight Poems of Emily Dickinson*; and then it proceeds through evocations of Bernstein, Barber, and Mahler. The sense of aural déjà vu soon grows tiresome. Fortunately, Danielpour's craftsmanship is improving, as is his sense of subtlety and variety. He takes full advantage of von Stade's crystalline voice, and especially given the poignancy of the subject matter, the work offers an emotional payoff without challenging the ears. Like much of the composer's work, its plea is ready and instantaneous, but the sentiment is fleeting.

TAKEN TOGETHER, *Elegies* and Danielpour's other compositions reflect the great post-everything compendium that rules today, which seems to have eclipsed many composers' drive to say anything particularly original. In Danielpour's world, there are no strict rules that dictate the structure or form of a composition; there is just a questing Romantic spirit, communing with the deities of music's past and hoping to provide his listeners with what Americans like to call a "peak experience." The paradox, of course, is that even while Danielpour's choices are so highly subjective, his music still bears so little of a personal stamp. At least he is honest about it: with startling candor, Danielpour has remarked that he prefers to be called an "assimilator." He has spoken openly of his compositional process as one of transforming "ideas that may resemble another composer's" into something that he hopes is his own.

Success by these methods is difficult,

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but it is not impossible; musical borrowing has a long and often respectable history. But the significant question is how it is done. The late Alfred Schnittke forged his own "polystylism" within which he could graft different continents and centuries onto one another like the legs and the arms of a single body. The results could be shocking, as in the jarring quotations and the frenzied tone clusters that he threw into his cadenzas to the Beethoven Violin Concerto; or they could be darkly humorous, as in his Concerto Grosso No. 1, in which the cacophony passes like a cloud to reveal a swaggering tango for violin and harpsichord. But they were always incontrovertibly Schnittke.

A large part of what made Schnittke's borrowing successful was his sense of irony. When past masters appear in his scores, they are quoted from the perspective of the composer's all-too-knowing present. Sometimes the references are direct and pristine, thereby making a pointed contrast with surrounding textures. Sometimes they are smeared viciously with Schnittkean dissonance, which is itself a sage comment on the impossibility of retrieval.

But Danielpour's music is shamelessly unironic; we are awash in the music of the past simply because it is beautiful, and because we still like it. What better way, after all, to have audiences appreciate new music again than to give them music of pure retrieval, to make new music sound like the music that they knew before the fall? But if we wish to hear Bernstein, then let us have *West Side Story*, not Danielpour. And even if the younger composer could write perfect Bernsteinian tunes, we cannot hear them as if this were 1960. We hear instead a contemporary choosing to speak in another's voice, as if it were another time and another place.

THIS IS HARDLY the first time that music has sought to move forward by looking back. Looming over Danielpour's adventures in neo-Romanticism is the ghost of Stravinsky, whose own neo-classicism in the 1920s came to infuriate composers who were bent on a linear notion of progress in music, Schoenberg most conspicuously. "Only the new in art, only what has not been said before, is worthy of being said at all," Schoenberg wrote in 1930 in a lecture called "New and Outmoded Music, or Style and Idea." Schoenberg attacked the claim that challenging music was undesirable to the young audiences of the day, conjuring images of North Pole explorers, ocean pilots, and world-record breakers to suggest that the young were "more readily inspired by the difficult, the dangerous, the mysterious, the deep, the recondite, the complex of thought than they are by things that they understand on first contact."

Most interestingly, Schoenberg marshaled his own historical arguments to sketch a theory of musical evolution. He argued that new directions in music arise as a corrective to past excesses. If the composers of a given period focus too intensely on melody, for example, then they eventually bring about a generation that devotes itself to polyphony. Similarly, music stretched out over great lengths of time and space—Romantic music, as Schoenberg understood it—produced a shift toward composition that was concise and compact.

Schoenberg's telling of the history was self-serving, as he placed his own discoveries at the inevitable climax of music's unfolding—and yet there is an important grain of truth in his dialectical theory. It seems to explain, for example, the outgrowth of minimalist simplicity as an antidote to the overweening complexity of modernism. But where Schoenberg's explanation stumbles is in its reliance on a Hegelian idea of musical progress that is internal to itself, and independent of music's creators, interpreters, and listeners. It is as if music were an organism whose future growth and development were encoded in a single strand of DNA, such that the composers, performers, and audience were only the instruments or the witnesses of this development. But when an art form ceases to bear any relationship to its public, as serialism eventually did, it becomes something entirely different: an independent avenue of scientific inquiry, perhaps, like Babbitt and his physicist-composer.

Very few would desire to return to the inscrutable modernism of past decades. The impulse of composers to write again for a wide audience is certainly a necessary correction, a step in the right direction. But it has opened a Pandora's box of kitsch and a terrible thralldom to the marketplace. The troubling aspect of Schoenberg's theory is not that he was partly wrong, but that he was partly right: to survive, music must continue to evolve. And this Richard Danielpour's art does not yet do. In addition to speaking comprehensibly to listeners, composers must keep pushing us to think and to hear more deeply, in ways that draw strength from music's history but do not force us back into a time that is not our own. Otherwise our aural muscles, as Ives warned, will indeed whither away, while the music that we love will continue to wander aimlessly in the shadows of its own monumental past. ■

Something 2 Die 4?

By JOHN MCWHORTER

Holler If You Hear Me: Searching for Tupac Shakur by Michael Eric Dyson

(Basic Books, 292 pp., $24)

I.

A FEW YEARS ago, I learned to expect that at the end of a linguistics class that I was teaching, as I consulted with a few students before we vacated the room, the air would suddenly be lacerated by fat bass tracks and streams of exuberant invective. Tupac, as they say, was in the house. The class that was about to begin was an elective called "The Poetry of Tupac Shakur." There are those who scoff at the existence of such a course in a university curriculum, but it never really surprised me. The subject of Pac, as he is often called, is sacred to a great many young blacks under forty, even to educated professionals whose lives in no way resemble the life described in Shakur's music. The very mention of his name often creates an expectant hush in a room. "He was an ICON! An ICON!" a black doctoral candidate shouted at me over e-mail a few years ago, when I questioned the wisdom of Shakur's adoption as a hero in the African American community.

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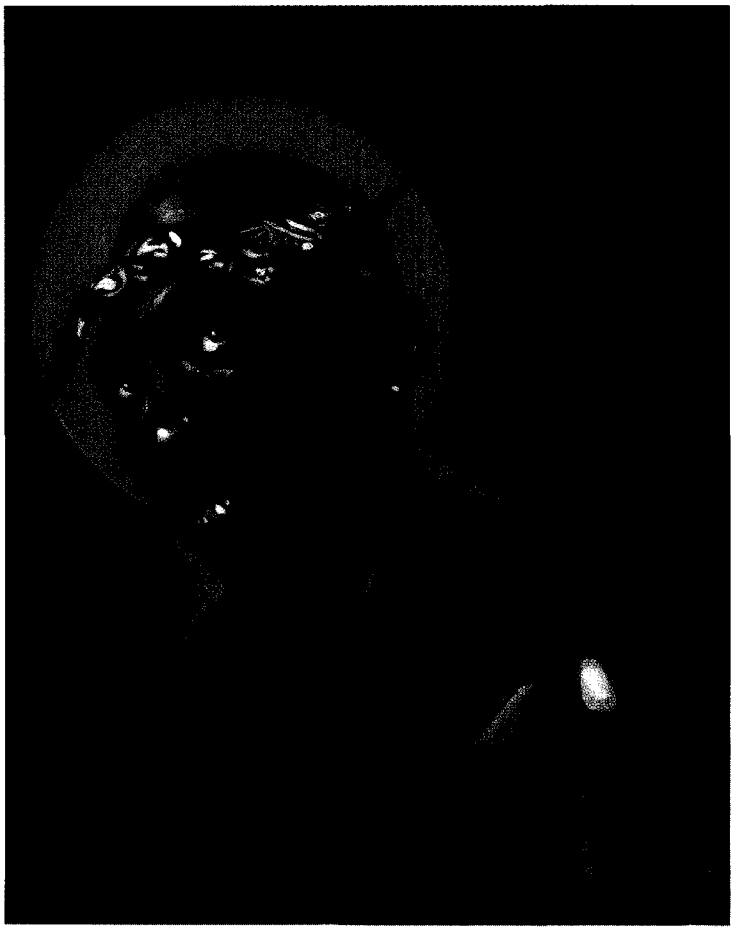
Just what was it about Tupac Amaru Shakur that inspired those capital letters? Michael Eric Dyson's book addresses the cult of Tupac. It is less a biography than a series of essays on topics such as Shakur's mother, his education, his relationship to women, and more generally on the subject of hip-hop ideology. Dyson is careful to call Shakur on his lapses, but the overall impression of his book is hagiographic. Dyson believes that Shakur was a "deep" brother who was "telling it like it is"; that he was equal in moral and cultural significance to Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. As for the other Tupac Shakur, the foul-mouthed rapper who kept popping up in headlines for criminal offenses, the provocative punk who was shot to death in 1996 in a hip-hop feud that he instigated, Dyson does not want that figure to live in memory. And so he concludes by elevating Shakur to a "ghetto saint."

Many people suppose that rap is a simple affair of choppy strophes of braggadocio chanted over an endlessly repeating bass line and drum track. But there is more to the music, which is why it inspires such fanatical allegiance. Its rhythms, for a start, are diabolically infectious, to a degree otherwise unknown in mainstream pop music. Rhythmic innovation is not unprecedented, of course, in the history of African American music; but hip-hop rhythms draw new water from the well. In much hip-hop, moreover, the preternaturally catchy rhythm is joined to an extraordinary lyrical deftness, all the profanity and the aggression and the misogyny notwithstanding. "Time to separate / the pros from the cons / the platinum from the bronze / that butter-soft shit from that leather on the Fonz": it may not be Wordsworth, but there is more craft in these lines by the rapper Jay-Z than in most of what passes for lyrics in contemporary white (and lot of contemporary black) pop music.

Good rap seasons the mix by playing the vocal line against the rhythm in creative ways. An especially effective trick is to drop the rhythm out suddenly, leaving the voice to underscore a point suspended in silence for a few pregnant syllables as we wait to exhale, the bass and rhythm then swinging back in for a new stanza. One feels as if one has fallen off a cloud only to be scooped up by a passing, well, rhythm track. Often separate vocal lines are superimposed on one another, creating an unexpected polyphony of sounds and meanings. Hip-hop is a rich if noisy palette, and writers such as Dyson are not off the mark in treating it as an artistic form.

Thus the romance of Tupac Shakur begins with the fact that he was working in a uniquely seductive medium. But Dyson is not content to record only an artistic accomplishment. What set Shakur apart, in Dyson's account, was that he made the form into a vehicle for social, cultural, and political statements, and so he took his place as a bard of the inner-city predicament. Here Dyson falls into the common mistake of confusing prominence with originality, a common lapse in the historiography of popular culture. Rap had evolved towards political agitprop years before Shakur's debut recording, *2Pacalypse Now*, in 1991. Public Enemy, NWA (Niggaz With Attitude), and others were the real pioneers of "gangsta rap." Dyson is especially taken with Shakur's injection of a more tender social conscience into his work, trying to "explain the suffering of those he loved"; fans often adduce the song "Brenda's Got a Baby," chronicling a poor black teenager's pregnancy, to make this point. But even this was not new: Shakur merely joined a thriving sub-genre of what is called "consciousness rappers."



Tupac Shakur by Shawn Barber for The New Republic

Dyson shows, in a very interesting chapter called "School, Learning, and Tupac's Books," that Shakur was viciously well-read. His bookshelf appears to have ranged through not only Wright, Angelou, Walker, and Haley, but also Salinger, Hesse, Freud, García Márquez, Miller, Nin, and beyond. (The beyond includes Homer.) Nor was this mere display: despite not having graduated from high school, Shakur gave every indication of having read many of the books on his shelf. And yet this cannot properly serve as an adequate basis for admiring the music: precious little of all this literature made it into Tupac's lyrics.

What was it about him, then? The true power of Shakur originated, somewhat ironically, in his physicality. He was small and prematurely bald, with large, sad, almond-shaped eyes. His appearance evoked in women a combination of sexual attraction and maternal concern, the latter especially as he turned to criminality. And he was not conventionally handsome enough for men to perceive the "little brotha" as a threat: he could not have exerted such a hold on black men if he had been a tall, strapping hottie. Yet Jay-Z fits something like Shakur's physical description, and he does not command the devotion that Shakur did. So was it Shakur's film career that accounts for his extraordinary popularity? Having attended a performing arts high school in Baltimore, he was a gifted actor, turning in performances in films such as *Poetic Justice* (1993) that would have stood their ground even if he had not already been a famous musical performer. His films (and his videos, of course) certainly helped to imprint him in a special way.

But the key explanation for the phenomenon of Tupac Shakur lies elsewhere. What has cemented Shakur's reputation, I think, is that he always existed in legend rather than in reality. He began to live the "gangsta" life celebrated in so many of his songs, and a series of arrests culminated in a spell in prison for a rape charge; and then he was murdered. His criminal

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offenses took on an air of heroic rebellion, especially since there is reason to believe that the rape charge was false. Tupac's recordings expressed again and again his rage against police brutality and his conviction that ghetto pathologies were an inevitable consequence of "white supremacy." Add to this that he was given to premonitions of his own death, and you have all the conditions for a cult. Rumors persist that he is alive somewhere.

II.

UNDERSTANDING THE SHAKUR phenomenon also requires an engagement with his art. Dyson is rather reticent here when it comes to the particulars: we are allowed only the occasional couplet. Perhaps Dyson presumed that the readers of his book would be very familiar with its subject's words. Still, the book often leaves the impression that Shakur was a kind of hopped-up male version of Tracy Chapman, plangently recounting the sorrows of the hood. Given the implications that Dyson draws from the man and his music, it might be helpful to take a trip through an actual Shakur recording—say, *Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z.*, his second disc, which appeared in 1993.

The CD opens with "Holler If Ya Hear Me," which superimposes a swaggering call to armed inner-city rebellion ("much love to my brothas in the pen / see ya when i free ya / if not, when they shove me in / once again it's an all-out strike / keep your hands on your gat / now your boys watch your back") upon a sinfully infectious rhythm track. Next is "Pac's Theme," an interlude that cross-cuts an excerpt from an anti-rap statement by Dan Quayle with gradually coalescing segments of a spoken manifesto by Shakur: "I was raised in this society so there's no way you can expect me to be a perfect person. I'm-a do what I'm-a do. That's how I feel. I'll do whatever I like. I'm not a role model." Then "Point the Finga" decries Shakur's mistreatment by the media ("I guess nobody loves a rap singa / that's why these mothafuckas point the finga"). This song also includes rap's trademark misogyny, cross-cut with a female voice wheedling, "Can we get some?"

The next triptych on the record, "Something 2 Die 4," "Last Wordz," and "Souljah's Revenge," returns to the subject of the street riot. "One nigga / teach two niggas / teach fo' niggas / teach mo' niggas": this theme runs throughout. Liquor, jealousy, and recklessness are not "something to die for," but rising up against police brutality ("*fuck* the police!") is. Then "Peep Game," "Strugglin'," and "Guess Who's Back" mine the angry vein further, mixing macho strutting and references to "bitches" into a concentrated running down of police forces as occupying armies. This was recorded in the wake of the Rodney King episode (Shakur mentions King on *2Pacalypse Now*), and so the hostility to the cops seemed especially urgent at the time. A much-noted moment in "Peep Game" is the famous couplet "Boom bang boom it's a stick-up / Vice President Dan Quayle, eat a dick up," with Shakur cannily ending the track by repeating the last four words without any accompaniment.

This is followed by "Representin' 93," a kind of wave from the stage, paying tribute to assorted black pop stars of the period and including another "holler to my niggas in the pen." Then comes a change in tone with the slower groove of "Keep Ya Head Up," a tribute to welfare mothers. This is the kind of ghetto anthem that Dyson and other Shakur fans revere.

> I think it's time to kill for our women,
> time to heal our women,
> be real to our women.
> And if we don't we'll have a race of babies
> that will hate their ladies
> that make the babies,
> and since a man can't make one,
> he has no right to tell a woman when and
> where to create one.

But the nobility of the sentiment is not allowed to stand unqualified. Just three tracks later comes "I Get Around," in which Shakur joins some guest rappers in telling women to stand in line, given that "2Pacalypse Now don't stop for no ho's."

In between, there is the title track, which is more invective against the police ("Ya gotta know how to shake the snakes, nigga / 'cause the po-lice love to break a nigga, / send 'im upstate 'cause they straight up hate the nigga"), and a corollary rumination called "The Streetz R Deathrow" justifying thuggish behavior as an inevitable product of fatherlessness ("So call me crazy but this is what you gave me"). "Papa'z Song" is another time-out for family issues, indicting and rejecting an absent father who reappears: "Mom's always [at] work / I barely see ya / I'm startin' to get worried, without her, Pops, I'll grow to be ya." The mother whores to pay the rent, and grows to hate her child because he looks like his father. Shakur then allows the father to explain himself: he left because there was no way to make more than a pittance legally, and so he took off to try to make a big score for his family outside of the law. Thus everyone—the son, the mother, the father—is caught up in currents beyond their control.

Is there a solution? The only solution recommended by Shakur is a return to the race riots of the late 1960s: the record goes out on the gutbucket loping swing of "5 Deadly Venomz," a final upturned finger at the police ("crazy disaster / mack-11 blaster / and i run faster / than a lotta cops i can't be stopped / till my head gets popped"). Shakur brings the rhythm track back up briefly after the fade-out before fading back to black for good. The Baldwin-like message has been that we better not forget the fire next time: just when you think we're gone, we'll be back—with our hands on our gats.

THERE IS ELECTRICITY here, no doubt about it. The rhythms penetrate to the heart of one's being, and in the right mood one can sit back and indulge in the "character" that Shakur "portrays." For this is certainly an exercise in acting: many critics of hip-hop miss the theatrical aspect of the genre. What got lost during the uproar over Ice-T's "Cop Killer" was that on a certain level such rappers are not so much proposing cold-blooded murder as striking an attitude. Fans appear to be in on the artifice: when black men recite "Pac" lyrics, they often spontaneously adopt a studied theatrical affect, showing that they enjoy the material more as performance than as instruction.

For Dyson, however, hip-hop is more than just inner-city surrealism for the dance floor. It is also an urgent political statement. To address this claim, we must consider the overall effect of a CD such as this one upon the listener. For a start, the overall impression in Shakur's music is not of a sad-eyed little fella lapsing into occasional vulgarity out of a sense of powerlessness. Dyson frequently refers to Shakur's "sonorous baritone"; but Shakur's voice and diction are actually rather ordinary, and the power of his vocals is owed to the fact that it is a smug, cocky sneer, redolent with a summons to any black person who calls himself "authentic" to join in the same nasty tone. The violence and the woman-bashing are not ornamental to Shakur's tone, they are essential to it. And so it is unfair to dismiss the criticisms of rap for its incitement to such notions as the promotion of an anti-black stereotype. Tender moments such as "Brenda's Got a Baby" are just the garnish in this genre. What one sees on the labels and in the marketing iconography of the best-selling rappers is by and large what one gets. And what one gets is the promotion of an anti-black stereotype.

Yet Dyson claims that Shakur's music, and by extension hip-hop in general, is a vital political statement about black oppression, a "critique of a society that produces the need for the thug persona." He chronicles Shakur's upbringing by a former Black Panther mother who fell into drug dependency and often neglected

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him, moving him from one seedy milieu to another. His mother's radical politics, combined with the fatalism that is common in poor black communities, imbued Shakur early and decisively with Marxist perspectives on American society and the place of blacks in it.

Shakur could have taken this worldview in a number of directions. But he developed his particular critical standpoint in a very lamentable direction. By the time he was in jail, he was giving interviews equating black manhood with being a violent thug, and advocating a "new black nationalism" headed by "rich revolutionaries." If he gave any explanation for this marriage of radicalism and riches, Dyson does not provide it. More likely, these ideas sprang from the painfully obvious materialism of the hip-hop world, its flamboyant celebration of the money to be gained from regaling black audiences with tales of how hopelessly mired in racism all blacks are. Call this a paradox. It is certainly a long way from Marxism or any sort of moral uplift.

I UNDERSTAND THAT white pop stars get rich, too; but even the most screechingly anti-establishment punkers skirt their wealth as an embarrassing topic. As Kelefa Sanneh puts it in a recent article on hip-hop in *The New Yorker*, "It's hard to imagine a major rapper refusing to make a video at the height of his career, the way Pearl Jam did." The different rules of the game in hip-hop are attributed, of course, to the experience of racial adversity, to the special satisfaction for blacks in having risen from disenfranchisement. The celebration of what is called "bling bling" in the hip-hop world is one of the only arenas in which black culture permits fellow blacks to flaunt the wealth that was available to so few in the old days. The rapper jangling with gold chains gets a pass by furiously maintaining symbolic allegiance to "my niggas in the pen."

Hip-hop artists themselves are explicit in keeping the "bling bling" front and center. For all we hear of how "serious" and "deep" Shakur was, he repeatedly deflects the impact of the more ruminative moments on *Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z.* After "Papa'z Song," itself a kind of Eugene O'Neill third act in miniature, he giggles: "Heh heh, we goin' platinum, nigga, we goin' platinum." It is significant that this is the only time on the entire recording that Shakur seems to be smiling. The message seems to be that the "deep" stuff is just a game or a gesture, that the sensationalistic evocations of violence are "the real deal."

In this respect, Shakur was business as usual. It is worth remembering that rap began as bubblegum party music, with

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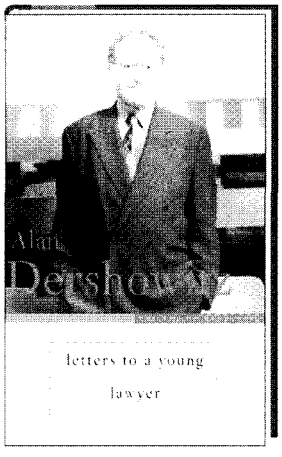

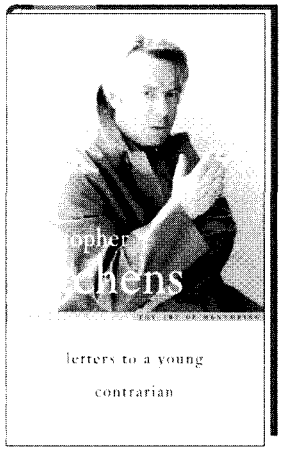

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the cheery "Rapper's Delight" by the Sugar Hill Gang in 1979, a musical evocation of the color pink if there ever was one. If we wished to speak theoretically, we could say that rap then evolved into an instrument of critique; but remarks by rap artists themselves tend to get in the way of such a lofty view. In a recent interview, the up-and-coming rapper Eve disparaged the "political" turn of gangsta rap as a detour: "We're doing this because we love it. You listen to records from back in the day and everybody's chillin' and partying on the records. They weren't talking about 'If I see you I'm gonna kill you.'" In an article in its series on race in America last year, *The New York Times* reported on an aspiring young rapper musing about the problematic tendency for hip-hop to celebrate black pathology ("I'm valid when I'm disrespected"), only to launch into a recording session of music so mindlessly abusive and profane that it chilled even the reporter. And—to speak from my own experience—last year I appeared on a television show with the rapper Coolio, who was a rather thoughtful person offstage. As soon as the cameras were rolling, however, he played the "thug" for his fans. During the commercial break he told me that he was only pretending to disagree with my views, for the sake of good television. I say, work it, Coolio—but this is not exactly the double consciousness that Du Bois had in mind.

THE ANALYSIS OF hip-hop as a thoughtful and concerned cry from the hard left, then, is a professor's mistake that is out of step with the more mundane reality. Rappers confronted by this admiring political analysis of their work try their best to play along, but usually they cannot help dissolving into buzzwords and semi-coherence. Who can blame them? All they want to do is make money by giving their audience what it wanted, like troubadours since time immemorial. (They can't help it if what their times demand is unlistenable to most people over forty.)

But Dyson, who is also a Baptist minister, demands that hip-hop be much more than entertainment. He insists that it is also a spiritual statement. We are offered for our edification nuggets of wisdom such as the rapper Big Syke's position on violence and religious salvation:

> I feel I'm in cool standings with God. God knows I'm not running around here trying to do anything wrong to anybody. But if somebody is trying to do something wrong to me, then I know I did wrong to people before, so now I have to realize that it could be just the repercussions from what I did. Now I've got to accept it like a man, and go to God if I get killed. But it might be that I got to kill this cat, because he was in here doing something he ain't supposed to do. That's just how life goes.

Myself, I cannot squeeze much sense from this utterance. Most of us probably come up with such vaporizings now and then; nobody talks like a book. But for Dyson to portray this as wise counsel or religious philosophy is an unwitting kind of condescension.

And since we are speaking homiletically, we must also ask: how constructive is Shakur's "message" in the end? True, he exhorts his listeners to "Keep Ya Head Up," but to what end? "One nigga / teach two niggas...."—but precisely what are said niggas supposed to be teaching one another? Alas, this allegedly exemplary voice of black America is teaching almost nothing but hopelessness. Again and again, he recommends rage. Dyson attempts a religious spin on this, noting that today's despair can become tomorrow's redemption, and he cites Jeremiah and the Psalms as his hip-hop prooftexts. But those biblical writers certainly did not advise that we stay in the darkness and sputter. And Jesus—whom one suspects Dyson would consider an apt comparison to our "ghetto saint"—counseled more constructive things under equally difficult conditions.

I do not want to overburden the music. We do not expect a detailed primer for community building from entertainers. But it is Dyson who raises rap stars into profound thinkers, who treats Shakur's dogged bleakness as a powerful idea. Nor is gloom all that hip-hop can offer. One tape I wore out several years back was the late, great rap group Arrested Development's *3 Years, 5 Months, and 2 Days in the Life of....* It had all the edgy and sexy qualities of the music, but not a word about a "bitch" or a gun. Instead it offered affection, concern, and hope, even as it retained the spiky attitude that is required for success in our moment.

III.

THE ETHOS IN which Shakur dwelled was really the facile fantasy of a brilliant but under-educated young man who had been barred from any substantial experience of the wider world. Poverty alone does not make people into monsters and zombies. There are billions of people in the world experiencing a depth of poverty that even a street kid like Shakur never knew, and yet their family bonds are strong and crime is virtually unknown among them. Describing Shakur's arrest after taping an episode of *In Living Color*, Dyson tells us that Shakur was "playing out the cards dealt to him, extending and experimenting with the script he was handed at birth." Come on. This was not a desolate "youth" desperately ripping off a liquor store somewhere: Shakur had just appeared on a hit television show, he was rolling in money, and he was hyper-literate besides! To elevate the parochial impressions of a kid with his eye on the till to the level of Martin Luther King's dream is rather an insult to black America.

Dyson hardly intends it that way. Indeed, he pauses to ask whether Shakur's "vision of authenticity was enabling or destructive." But then he sidesteps the issue, preferring to discuss instead how authentic Shakur was to "himself." He fleshes out this argument by reminding us (and those familiar with critical race studies will need no reminding) that an artist may "draw from the realm of collective experience embodied in cultural myths, racial allegories and ghetto legends." Fine, fine; but such an analysis renders the little brotha beyond judgment for anything.

"I was raised in this society," intoned Shakur, "so there's no way you can expect me to be a perfect person. I'm-a do what I'm-a do. That's how I feel. I'll do whatever I like. I'm not a role model." I cannot imagine how Dyson can sincerely paint this as "enabling." More to the point, as Dyson notes, Shakur had no love for blacks who had lifted themselves out of their disadvantages. He considered such brothers and sisters to have lost touch with "their own people" down there purveying the 5 Deadly Venomz. Shakur's lesson was always painfully clear: the measure of black authenticity is the street.

This lesson would have horrified most blacks before the 1960s, especially those in the middle class and above. But Dyson has faint regard for their "don't hang out our dirty laundry" anxiety. In his book *I May Not Get There With You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr.*, which was published last year, he rather innovatively portrays King as having "emancipated" black people to be able to air their pathologies without shame. In the same way, Dyson now observes, Shakur "thrust the sharp edges of his lyrics into the inflated rhetoric of orthodox blackness, challenging narrow artistic visions of black identity."

In Dyson's view, Shakur's critics are the ones with little vision. They are "unable to acknowledge the ingenuity of artistically exploring the attractions and limits of black moral and social subcultures. They endorse a 'positive' perspective that is as artificial and uncomprehending of the full sweep of black culture as is the exclusive celebration of pimps, playas, hos, macks and thugs." Good music. But how "explor-

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atory," really, is Shakur's interjection in the liner notes to his first CD to "fuck all police, Nazis, skinheads, whatever"?

The question is especially urgent given what Kelefa Sanneh nicely calls "the convergence of rap and rap sheet." Last fall a brawl broke out between rappers and their comrades-in-arms at the Source Awards ceremony. Yes, successful young white men fight, too—but I do not recall Bruce Springsteen, man of the people though he is, threatening Sting with a gun at the Grammys. "Persona-making," Dyson calls these mindless aggressions; but then it was "persona-making" that finally took Shakur himself out of the world.

Shakur had some awareness of the dumber patches in his social and political logic. He rapped that "nigga"—his favorite term for the black male—stands for "never ignorant, getting goals accomplished." But what goals was he suggesting that we accomplish? Are we truly to believe that Condoleezza Rice, Denzel Washington, and Anthony Williams ought to keep their hands on their gats? If such a course ever held promise, surely its promise was shattered thirty years ago when Huey Newton and Shakur's mother and the other militant black radicals of the 1960s self-destructed, while the black middle class found more conventional pathways towards satisfaction and success. Shakur's music—and Dyson's enthrallment to it—traps a new generation in old illusions. Harry Belafonte, whose civil rights credentials surely fulfill Dyson's criteria for "authenticity," has trenchantly remarked:

> Those rappers are caught in a trick bag, because it's a way to make unconscionable sums of money and a way to absent yourself from any sense of moral responsibility. It's all in the name of "that's the way we are." Well, is there more to us than being just the way we are? Do we have no responsibility? Do we have no sense of dignity?

Shakur's answer to these questions would have been no—and, sadly, one suspects that Professor Dyson would agree.

IV.

Any treatment of Shakur must finally grapple with the notorious vulgarity of his music and its medium. This music that Dyson considers to plumb "the heart of black culture's pursuit of authentic existence" is typified by such lines as "bitches shut up and show us your titties." In broad view, Dyson appears to consider this an "unfortunate" aspect of something that is otherwise a stirring call to freedom. But if hip-hop is really just party music aimed at the "bling bling," then the constant cussing and misogyny take on a different air. If the focus on violence is less a manifesto for change than a callow and mercenary gesture, then it is especially ugly and revolting.

Dyson firmly criticizes rappers for calling women "bitches" and "ho's," and for portraying them in videos as butt-waggling tramps. But overall he finds the portrayal of women in hip-hop merely "troubling." It is "troubling" indeed to watch the mental gymnastics that many intelligent black women go through to justify how women are portrayed in their favorite music. On a television special about race last fall, the MTV "veejay" Ananda Lewis announced that "when they say 'bitch' I know they're not talking about me." Her tone was designed to elicit a "Go, girl!" reaction from the predominantly black audience, but it didn't have its intended effect, because the point is shaky and even appalling. Just whom does Smith think they are talking about, if not her? Or was she implying that the "bitches" are black women less attractive and less fortunate than she is?

Dyson's main stratagem for getting past this kind of thing is the "Nobody Has a Problem When *They* Do It" argument. They, meaning whites. He cites Toni Morrison's observation that Shakespeare's vulgarities are considered merely quaint. Shakur was given to pointing out that the United States was built on violence, as we showed with our actions in Bosnia; and he

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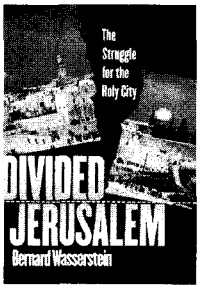

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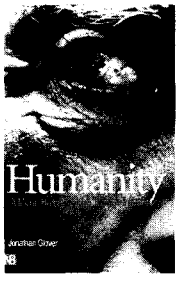

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collaborated with Snoop Dogg on a video comparing rap's violence cult to classic gangster films. But the analogies are wild. The vulgarities (as Morrison and Dyson should know) do not define Shakespeare's language and worldview in the way that they define hip-hop's language and worldview. And American gangster movies were not made as advertisements for the gangster lifestyle. Indeed, when a mainstream film veers too close to the argument that the essence of our national identity is senseless violence, it comes in for the same savage dismissal that hip-hop often elicits, as in the response to Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*.

The same problem mars Dyson's argument that Shakur's image of women does not deserve to rattle an appreciation of his accomplishment any more than Martin Luther King's offstage philandering deserves to rattle his place in history. Dismayed by the use that black conservatives have been making of King's skeptical statements about affirmative action, Dyson devoted four hundred pages to showing what a good lefty radical King was, and he included in his defense of King an extended parallel with Shakur. But sexism was rife in the biography of almost any man who came of age before the late 1960s. Anyway, King hardly considered his attitude to women admirable, or essential to himself or to America. Nor were the Temptations singing about killing and whoring as King made his revolution.

BUT DYSON'S APOLOGETICS are not yet done. He goes on to point out that old-time black blues singers got away with plenty of vulgarity and lurid depictions of women. This is true enough; but there is salty and there is spit in the eye. The boxed set of Robert Johnson's work does not come with an advisory label, and none of these singers evinced anything near the heartless dismissal of women that rappers routinely parade. After a number dissing a cruel woman, there would come a number ruing a lost love. We would search the blues archives in vain for an old blues singer croaking that he don't stop for no ho's (nor is there evidence that blues singers sang such things outside the censored environment of the studio to any substantial degree).

So let us stop pretending that an equivalence exists between "Eat a dick up" and *King Lear*, between "Fuck all police, Nazis, skinheads, whatever" and *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*. For the alarming truth is that the message that the world is getting—seventy percent of hip-hop's consumers in America are white—is that these hip-hop ideals are the essence of "black." This terrible distortion results in the likes of Upski, a.k.a. Billy Wimsatt, a twenty-something white man in New York portrayed in another of the articles in the *Times*' series on race. Feeling unfulfilled as a gawky white adolescent, Wimsatt embraced hip-hop and its speech patterns and ideology. Flush with the romantic success that his new "hip" identity occasioned, he has dedicated himself to helping whites "understand" black America through articles and a book on the hip-hop creed. Wimsatt travels the college circuit teaching whites to love blacks; part of his act involves eliciting testimonials from black students in the audience, and he often ends by urging everyone to dance. Wimsatt's notion that criminality and unfocused alienation are the essence of "blackness" is repulsive enough, but even more so when he complains that blacks "get medicated by aping the worst aspects of white culture."

Any black person who has encountered a white person gushing about how much they cherish black people for how "real" they are knows that there is a certain amount of Upski in many whites these days. As with the question of authenticity, however, the best Dyson can do here is to evade the issue, noting mechanically that it was racism that started the cycle in the first place:

> The global portrayal of black life cannot surely rest on the images or words of barely post-adolescent entertainers. This is not to deny that a single video by a rap artist can more successfully shred international boundaries than a hundred books by righteous authors. Neither is it to deny the huge responsibility such artists bear in confirming or combating hateful and ignorant beliefs about black folk that circulate around the globe. But that is just it: these beliefs are part of the ancient legacies of colonialism, racism and regionalism, legacies that persist despite the efforts of intellectuals, artists and leaders to destroy them.

This passage nicely illustrates a rhetorical stratagem to which Dyson often resorts: he dismisses an anti-rap charge, then he dutifully acknowledges a damning objection, and then he responds to it less by engaging the point than by pulling the camera back to cloak blacks in a cosmic immunity due to our painful history in this country. Thus the fact that hip-hop sticks it to "The Man" overrides any quibbles that one might have about its substance, which actually sticks it to blacks, too.

I do not doubt that there is a certain thrill in insisting that anything that a hip-hop singer says or does may be excused because America was founded upon racism and the dehumanization of blacks ("I'm-a do what I'm-a do. That's how I feel. I'll do whatever I like"); but if this exemption extends to the recycling of that same racism and that same dehumanization, then the answer to Dyson's question as to whether rap is enabling or destructive is painfully clear. We decry the criminalization of black men, the racialization of poverty, the subtle diminishment of black boys in schools, the high rate of teen pregnancy among young black women—but most black Americans under forty, regardless of class, income, or educational attainment, see a stirring reflection of their identities in a music that celebrates poor, violent, and woman-hating young black men as heroes. The message is that the "real" black person avidly seeks the wealth that is now available to us, but at the same time nurtures a sense of himself as an embattled alien in his own land. It is difficult to see how this can lead to anything but dissension and anomie.

And yet black academics are building a small industry upon the celebration of how noble and "authentic" all this is. We would not want them to dismiss a music so deeply cherished by most young blacks, a music that has its strengths and is not going away. Yet we are faced, in this music and in the culture of this music, with a black America in which Tupac Shakur has more of an aura than Martin Luther King. If this makes rap paradoxical, then the paradox is certainly troubling. ■

Bookcase

My empty bookcase yawns and rises
from its paint job, white asphalt
newly laid over a grid of back streets,
the chill of what assurance supports it all
still in the air, no music, no voices.
Who wants to live with what he knows?
While I sit on the storage boxes,
my double's slowly making his way
among shop windows and bloody altars,
holding pages to the light, changing
sex to distance himself from force
or faithfulness, the household demons.
It's late. Opportunities are multiplying.
I am what I did? I am what I wait for?
I feel something returning, like a book
put back on the shelf, slid between
names like mine, my story, my fault.

J.D. McClatchy

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The Polite Philosopher

By CHARLES LARMORE

A Small Treatise on the Great Virtues by André Comte-Sponville translated by Catherine Temerson

(Metropolitan Books, 352 pp., $27.50)

VIRTUE IS BACK. During most of the last century, the word had an archaic ring. It suggested little more than chastity in women, and it was about as popular. Today virtue enjoys a new prestige, and owing to its long eclipse it seems a notion full of promise, unlike the all-too-familiar language of rights and duties. William Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*, published nearly a decade ago, represents the most widely known, though least interesting, form that this trend has taken. For Bennett, intent on scolding a permissive age, "virtue" was a useful term precisely because it sounded old-fashioned. But the current revival of virtue is different. Abstinence and censoriousness are not the values that it promotes. Those values certainly have no place in André Comte-Sponville's remarkable book.

To understand what it is about the renewed interest in virtue that deserves our attention, we need to recall the reasons why the moral life, in which we look beyond ourselves and take to heart another's good, is necessarily a difficult affair. For it is the nature of morality as a whole that is at issue. Saints and sages may never have to think twice about their actions. For the rest of us, it is a different matter. We cannot help wondering what exactly it is to do well by others, and why in the end we should want to do so. These two questions naturally trouble imperfect beings such as ourselves, and reflecting systematically upon them is the business of moral philosophy.

Over the centuries, philosophers have proposed three different answers to the question of what it is to act morally. One view is that we should aim to bring about the most good overall, taking into account all those who may be affected by our actions. Another is that we ought to treat individuals as ends in themselves, refusing to sacrifice their fundamental rights, even for the good of the whole. These two conceptions have dominated modern thought, and the conflict between them continues to pit the utilitarian tradition of Mill against the many successors of Kant.

Yet ancient ethics generally followed a third path. For Aristotle, acting well depends not on observing some single master principle, but on having acquired a range of virtues—courage, temperance, justice, prudence, and so on. They supply the habits of mind, the patterns of thought and feeling, by which we can discern what the circumstances require. The reason why I should rush to save a person in danger is not that thereby I achieve the most good or that thereby I respect the person as an end, but that rescuing him is the courageous thing to do. The worth of the act turns on the quality of character that it expresses.

This way of thinking can seem impossibly vague. How do we distinguish between courageous and foolhardy? And how can we determine whether an act of courage is really good unless we know the end that it serves? (Recall that stock figure "the courageous Nazi," to whom I shall return.) The two modern views pride themselves on avoiding this sort of imprecision. They each offer something like a method for defining our duty to others. Yet this advantage comes at a price. Since the principles proposed—producing the most good, respecting persons as ends—are meant to be usable by anyone in any situation, they rely on a very abstract notion of the moral agent. Moral goodness seems ultimately to consist in the conscientious commitment to impartiality. This bare-bones psychology may appear too meager a basis for dealing with the other essential question, which is why we should want to do what is right. That question assumes a special urgency, moreover, as older religious motivations lose their grip. Today more than ever, it seems, we need an account of moral right and wrong that shows why our own deepest aspirations should move us to act morally.

This is precisely where ancient ethics

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displays its strength. In holding that the moral worth of an action depends on the quality of character that it expresses, Aristotle placed the focus on the agent's own good. His ethics is not egoistic, to be sure: the courageous person genuinely wants to save others who are in danger, and not merely to be thought well of for doing so. Still, the ultimate rationale for being courageous is that thereby we ourselves are better people. The virtues, according to Aristotle, develop and refine the various elements of our humanity; their exercise is the essence of a flourishing life. Not surprisingly, dissatisfaction with the aridity of modern approaches to morality has led in recent years to a rebirth of "virtue ethics," as it is called. Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, which appeared in 1985, is its most famous document. But the phenomenon is not limited to the Anglo-American world. It thrives on the Continent as well, and one of its most spectacular products is Comte-Sponville's "small treatise."

COMTE-SPONVILLE, WHO was born in 1952, teaches philosophy at the Sorbonne. When the original version of his book appeared, published by the Presses Universitaires de France, it quickly found more than a purely academic audience. It became a runaway best-seller, staying at the top of the charts for months on end, and it was awarded a prize by the Académie Française. Professional philosophers were divided in their verdicts, and envy inspired a great deal of the carping. In truth, the book is a magnificent achievement, a volume full of understanding and imagination from which no reader can fail to profit. It is not at all a work of *haute vulgarisation*, but a systematic theory of the virtues that can stand comparison with the central books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

As one would expect, there is little sympathy here for the Kantian idea of duties that are binding on us unconditionally, apart from our own interests and desires. "I don't really believe in duties," Comte-Sponville declares, for "duty is a constraint, a 'yoke' as Kant said." The idea of duty is an imperfect expression of the moral life, since acting well ultimately means the freedom of doing as we want, once we are endowed with those excellences of character that make us, as he says, "truly human." Such is the gist of Comte-Sponville's "virtue ethics."

But what distinguishes Comte-Sponville from other figures in this movement, and what makes his book unique in any language, is that he is not content simply to talk about virtue in general and to issue calls for philosophical reform. He plunges into the analysis of the particular virtues themselves, spelling out the specific forms of concern and perception that they embody. Each of his eighteen chapters is devoted to a separate virtue, from politeness, through the four cardinal virtues (prudence, temperance, courage, and justice), to other qualities such as tolerance and humor, and finally to love. Comte-Sponville's *Small Treatise* is not a modest undertaking.

Despite its comprehensiveness, the book does not seek to present any novel doctrines. Comte-Sponville's attitude is summed up in his introductory remarks about love: "All there is to say has perhaps already been said. What we must now do is try to understand it." He quotes liberally from a great many earlier thinkers (chiefly the great philosophers of the past, but also writers such as Rilke and Gide, and even Woody Allen, who figures as an exemplar of the virtue of humor), and his chapters are the richer for the different perspectives that they weave together in their portraits of the various virtues. A notable feature of the book is the homage that it continually pays to the philosophical tradition. Indeed, fidelity figures as one of the principal virtues discussed. It consists in acknowledging our debt to those who have gone before us and to the ongoing practices that preserve their achievements, since no one can work out the nature of good and evil simply by his own individual reason. "There is no virtue," Comte-Sponville observes, "without fidelity."

THIS MEANS THAT the virtues themselves are not timeless, but historical. Different traits of character are likely to be prized in different cultures. This point does not receive all the development that one might wish, though Comte-Sponville mentions the standard example of humility, an originally Christian virtue that he understands as a sense of one's own relative insignificance. The virtue of humility appears to have been unknown to the ancient Greeks. It was clearly foreign to Aristotle's thinking. His ideal was the *megalopsychos*—the virtuous person who is keenly aware of his own worth, who feels only moderate pleasure at receiving great honors since (in Aristotle's words) "he is getting no more than his due," and who "rarely expresses admiration since nothing is great in his eyes." Today we would surely find such a person insufferable.

For all his respect for tradition, though, Comte-Sponville has made the thought of the past very much his own. A personal voice is unmistakable on every page, and there are a number of unusual emphases and even some surprises. One of his most penetrating chapters deals with forgiveness. We all know that it is often hard to forgive; but as he observes, it can be just as hard to explain what forgiveness is. To forgive is to look beyond the wrong that someone has done us, to wipe the slate clean. But how exactly do we do that? It cannot be that we erase the wrong itself, declaring it null and void. Not even God can undo what has already been done. Nor do we forgive by blotting the offense from our memory. To forgive is not to forget. An act of forgiveness is a decision that we make, but no one can decide to forget something. Moreover, some misdeeds are better not forgotten, because there is much to learn from them, or because the injury was done to people dear to us and the memory of their suffering should never perish.

Thus, forgiveness can begin to look like a mysterious mental operation, or even like a bit of play-acting, as though it amounted simply to pretending that a wrong never occurred or that we have forgotten it. In fact, this last suggestion contains a grain of truth, even if there is nothing make-believe about forgiveness, and Comte-Sponville dispels the mystery early on in his chapter. To forgive means no longer to hold against someone the wrong that she has committed, to overcome the natural reaction of wanting to retaliate. In a way, we do act as though there had been no offense, since we do not try to even the score. But it would be more accurate to say that forgiveness aims not at denying the wrong, but at starting afresh. It is the virtue, in Comte-Sponville's words, "that triumphs over rancor, over justified hatred, not by expunging the wrong, but by stilling the grudge we bear against the person who wronged us." It differs from clemency, since we may decline to punish without abandoning our resentment, just as we may think punishment useful and yet forgive.

This brilliant discussion reaches its climax with the argument that we can forgive our enemies not just after the fact, but even as they go on wronging us and remaining our foes. At these moments, forgiveness is at its most difficult, but also at its most noble. What Comte-Sponville has in mind is not turning the other cheek: we ought to combat our enemies in order to stop the wrong that they do. There is a world of difference, however, between resisting evil and exacting vengeance, between fighting back and getting even; and the spirit of forgiveness requires that, whatever the fierceness of the struggle, we keep our sights trained on the former. "It does not follow," as Comte-Sponville remarks, "that, having enemies, we must necessarily hate them"—though it is stretching things a bit to add, as he does, that we should love them instead. The essential point, as he puts it, is the need "to overcome our own hatred if we cannot

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make [our enemy] overcome his," for then we "do not add evil to evil."

What a shame, then, that Comte-Sponville injects into this perceptive analysis a further and far less convincing idea about forgiveness. We are moved to forgive, he claims, once we understand the various factors that led the person to act wrongfully. Understanding the causes of human action reveals how unfree men are, and in the light of this knowledge we cease to hate anyone for the wrong that he does, since we realize that the person could not have done otherwise than he did. "It is not his fault if he is guilty," so Comte-Sponville imagines we will conclude. "He is a prisoner of his own hatred, stupidity, and blindness."

There is very little to be said for this familiar argument, which goes back to Spinoza, one of Comte-Sponville's intellectual heroes, whose maxim was "not to mock, lament, or execrate but to understand human actions." If we regard people's actions as following ineluctably from their character and their circumstances, just as all natural phenomena occur with necessity given antecedent conditions, we may no more hate them for the harm that they do than we hate a bolt of lightning for the damage that it causes. But by the same token, there will be no room to say that they have wronged us any more than the lightning, which could not have struck elsewhere than it did.

To the extent that determinism denies human freedom, it abolishes moral distinctions. Besides, determinism is a speculative doctrine, which far exceeds the available evidence. In reality, forgiveness has nothing to do with an understanding of the causal order of the world. It is a distinctly moral achievement, since it turns on the realization, which otherwise Comte-Sponville describes so well, that a violation of the moral order of things still calls for a moral response and not for hatred and revenge.

COMTE-SPONVILLE'S FIRST chapter, which takes up the subject of politeness, is equally striking. In his view, politeness is a propaedeutic to virtue; and his discussion leads into some of the deepest questions about the nature of virtue and about the merits of "virtue ethics" as a moral philosophy. Being polite, Comte-Sponville remarks, consists in doing what is generally done, in heeding the proprieties, as when we say "please" and "thank you," or stand up to greet a guest, or show good table manners. It is thus "the origin of all the virtues," since it provides our initiation into the moral life.

What he means is that children come to understand that "one *shouldn't* do that" by first learning that "one *doesn't* do that." For them, morality is simply a matter of doing what is done, as though telling the truth were like chewing with one's mouth closed. Only with time, as habits are built up and eventually understood, do we come to see the difference and to realize that while politeness has to do with appearances ("what you see is all there is"), morality involves intentions and concern for others. Without our prior training in the usages of society, however, we would not have the data for this deeper understanding. As Aristotle remarked (in a line that is Comte-Sponville's point of departure), "we become just by doing just acts."

Oddly, given the significance that he attaches to it, Comte-Sponville does not consider politeness to be a virtue in its own right. In adults, he says, it is "but a simulacrum that imitates virtue," since "please" and "thank you" are only a show of respect and gratitude, not respect and gratitude themselves. Politeness cannot be a virtue itself, he argues, since being polite does nothing to diminish the wrongness of the evil deeds that such behavior may accompany. It does not embody a moral good that could offset some of the bad. The cruel tyrant who happens to observe the rules of etiquette, holding the door for his victims as he leads them into the torture chamber, is no less evil for being polite.

There are a number of things wrong with this argument. Politeness, though scarcely a major virtue, seems nonetheless a rudimentary one. After all, it embodies a certain self-discipline as well as an elementary recognition of others. And while good manners certainly do not lessen the viciousness of a torturer, are things any different with the other virtues? Is it ever true that an evil action is made less wicked by its embodying some virtue as well? Comte-Sponville sometimes appears to think it is. In his chapter on courage, he declares that if we say of an SS officer that "he is cruel and courageous," the two adjectives "subtract from each other." They do so, he is claiming, not because these qualities belong to different periods of the man's life, but precisely insofar as they supposedly characterize his very actions as a servant of the Reich, actions that are thus "cruel *though* courageous."

I doubt that on reflection we would want to talk this way about the Nazi. Courage may entail "the incurring of risk without selfish motivation," as Comte-Sponville writes; but though the SS officer may display that trait, it does not deserve to be called "courage" in his case, at least if courage is still to count as a virtue. The more appropriate term for his behavior is "zeal." Unlike courage, zeal does not suggest that there is anything worthy about

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the end being pursued. Zeal can serve heinous causes as well as noble ones. That is why we do not think of zeal as a virtue, and why we would not dream of supposing that "zealous" and "cruel" subtract from one another. Not "cruel though courageous," but "cruel and zealous" is exactly what we should say about the SS officer, since his selfless running of risks is not a mitigating factor. It is part and parcel of the evil that he does.

COMTE-SPONVILLE MISSES his step here because of his tendency to regard selflessness as a mark of virtue. Like a latter-day Pascal, he enjoys making the self an object of opprobrium. The self "is always unjust," he charges, "a stockpile of underhanded tricks," "nothing more than the set of illusions it has about itself." Egoism, he claims, forms "the principle of all evil." This is a simplistic analysis, to say the least. Those unable to love themselves are unlikely to have any affection for others. Moreover, the greatest evils in human history are often the work of fanatics selflessly devoted to some supreme cause.

Comte-Sponville shows, in fact, an undeveloped sense of the varieties of vice. Though he catalogues eighteen different virtues, he lumps all the vices together under the single notion of being a *salaud*, or a "bastard," an oddly coarse and casual term that recurs again and again throughout this book. But surely vice is not the mere absence of virtue. Vice exhibits a wealth of forms: avarice, envy, lust, and vanity, each driven by desires and ways of thinking all its own. As Dante showed, vice presents as rich a domain of moral psychology as virtue itself.

Fortunately, Comte-Sponville sometimes acknowledges that the self and self-love are not always detestable. It is also reassuring that in a different passage he gets the matter of courage right. "Prudence, temperance, and courage," he writes, "are virtues only when they serve good ends." A quality that in other contexts would be admirable ceases to be a virtue when it is exercised in the service of evil. As a result, it cannot be a good that somehow lessens the enormity of the wrong being done. In this regard, politeness is really no different from the other qualities that we consider virtues. It is a sham courtesy displayed by the torturer who addresses you as "sir" or "madam" while tightening the screws.

This is not a quarrel over words, but a question of substance—a question about whether "virtue ethics" can be the complete and self-standing account of our moral experience that it intends to be. If a quality counts as a virtue only when it is directed toward an appropriate end, then how can the idea of virtue serve as the fundamental notion of ethical theory? Won't our moral thinking have to rest instead on a conception of the human good and on ultimate standards of right and wrong, by which we make out the proper ends of action?

Consider the quality of gratitude. Comte-Sponville claims that being grateful for a kindness that someone has shown us is always a virtue. "What a pleasure to say thank you!" he exclaims, since it is only natural and fitting to love the cause of our joy. But is this necessarily true? Depending on another for our happiness can be demeaning if we lack any inner resources of our own, and showing gratitude only compounds the humiliation, particularly when we do so eagerly. The slave who gratefully thanks his master for the one day in the week when he is not beaten is not displaying a virtue.

Wordsworth made a similar point at the end of his poem "Simon Lee," the story of a once-proud huntsman now so feeble and impoverished that he gushes in thanks when the poet cuts for him a rotten tree root on his poor scrap of land. Simon Lee's gratitude is not a virtue to be praised, but the sign of a degradation that ought to be remedied.

> I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
> With coldness still returning;
> Alas! the gratitude of men
> Has oftener left me mourning.

And if gratitude is not always a virtue, how do we determine when it is one, if not by appeal to general values such as that of human independence?

ONCE WE BEGIN thinking along these lines, however, we will find it difficult to avoid the characteristic approaches of modern ethics that the recent turn to "virtue" has hoped to replace. Assume that personal freedom, living by one's own efforts and not by another's leave, is an element of the human good. Then we will need to know how we should go about pursuing this value, not only in our own lives but also in society at large. Ought we to bring about as much of it overall as we can? Or is personal freedom a right that each individual should enjoy without fear that it will be abridged so that others may have more?

If abstract principles of this sort must guide our moral thinking, then we run again into the problem of what the source of our allegiance to them can be. What interests of our own can move us to care about promoting the total good or respecting persons as ends in themselves? "Virtue ethics" may succeed in avoiding this puzzle, but only because it does not go deep enough. It offers an easy answer to "Why be moral?" because it focuses on the virtues themselves and takes for granted that we know what they are and when they are in evidence. For the virtues can then present themselves as simply different dimensions in which we develop our own humanity. But as soon as we admit that identifying the virtues in the first place calls on impartial principles making no special reference to the agent's own good, "virtue ethics" loses its advantage. It ceases to be the promising alternative that it initially appeared to be.

ONE MIGHT OBJECT that there is a way to escape this conclusion. Suppose that we could pick out the virtues, not by having to appeal to such principles but by exercising a virtue whose essence is to define the very boundaries of the moral realm. Comte-Sponville's ethics takes just this shape, and for him the super-virtue is love. All the various virtues, he claims, are ways of making up for the absence of love. The actions that they require of us are ones that, being virtuous, we will want to do and will therefore do freely (which is how virtue goes beyond the mere sense of duty). Even so, we will still understand them as the actions that we ought to do. If, however, we loved our fellow man with all our heart, we would do these things naturally, without any thought about what it is that we ought to do. Generous people freely give to those in want, but they would have no need of the virtue of generosity if they loved their fellows as a mother loves her child. The courageous person may readily risk his life for a friend, but courage is unnecessary when we love our friend more than our own life. "Morality's maxim is: Act as though you loved," writes Comte-Sponville. "We have need of morality only because we cannot love"—that is, we cannot love so fully as to make morality superfluous.

Obviously, everything depends on what is meant by "love." Comte-Sponville sets out three distinct notions, arranged in a hierarchy. *Eros* is the love that longs to merge and be at one with its object; condemned to perpetual disappointment, its best-known expression is romantic passion. *Philia* is the love that delights in the independent existence of its object; it expresses itself in joy rather than in passion and finds its model in friendship (as the Greek term indicates). This sort of love often moves us to care about another individual's good, yet it cannot serve as a compass for morality since it remains too personal, directed as it is at those whom we happen to enjoy being with. We cannot be friends with everyone, whereas everyone ought to be to some extent an object

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What are the facts?

No "Sacrifice" Will Overcome the Hatred: Many still believe that the conflict between the Arabs and the Jews could be settled if the Israelis were willing to bring greater "sacrifices for peace". Such "sacrifices" would include relinquishing ever-larger portions of their tiny country (less than half the size of San Bernardino County in California) to the Palestinians, dismantling the "settlements" in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), handing the Golan Heights to Syria, and allowing the "return of the refugees" a group that has grown miraculously from about 500,000 to somewhere around 5 million, and the absorption of even a substantial fraction of which would signify the demographic end of the Jewish state. But by now, after over one year of the bloody war against Israel in the Al Aksa Intifada, it is clear to even the most confirmed "doves", to even the most ardent supporters of the "Oslo Peace Process," that absolutely nothing that Israel could do, any further "sacrifice" that Israel were prepared to bring would satisfy the Arabs and would promote peace. The sad but irrefutable conclusion is that only the complete disappearance of Israel, its annihilation, its being wiped off the map could satisfy the Arabs and most of the Moslem world.

During his recent visit to Syria, the Pope listened to Bashar-al-Asad, the President of Syria, declare that "...the Jews have betrayed Jesus Christ, with the same mentality with which they tried to betray and kill the prophet Mohammed." (Disappointingly, the Pope did not protest this canard, either right then or at a later date.) Saddam Hussein, the tyrant of Iraq, expressed the wishes of his country and of the Arab world with the succinct entreaty "God damn the Jews."

> "Israel's only course...is to assume its previous stance of unflinching deterrence...and not to be inhibited...to preempt resolutely if it appears necessary to assure survival of the country."

Mortal Hatred and the "Big Lie": The "big lie," invented by the notorious Joseph Goebbels of Nazi infamy, is a mainstay of Arab hatred and propaganda. In Egypt and Jordan (the two Arab countries technically at peace with Israel), government-controlled news sources published that Israel had distributed drug-laced chewing gum and candy to kill children and to make women sexually corrupt. The Jews (Israelis) are being accused of having introduced foot-and-mouth disease in the Middle East. The age-old calumny of Jews using the blood of Christian children in order to bake their Passover matzos is alive and well in Arab publications. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, an egregious falsification originating in Czarist Russia, is a steady best-seller in all Arab countries. Among other malevolent fabrications, it accuses "international Jewry" of "limitless ambition, inexhaustible greed, and hatred beyond imagination."

In the controlled Arab press, Holocaust denial and accusation of the Zionists having been in cahoots with the German Nazis are regular features. Egypt's government-sponsored *Al Akhbar* newspaper has expressed fervent thanks to Adolf Hitler for having taken advance revenge on the "vilest criminals on the face of the earth." Still, it berates him for not having been thorough enough in his task of extermination. The Arabs do not consider Israel a normal country, but a creation of the devil, an excrescence, a malignant force of aggressors, murderers, infidels and barbarians. It should be destroyed, for the glory of God, no matter what sacrifices that might entail.

Mortal hatred against Israel and against the Jews is taught to Arab children from the very first grade. Children are encouraged to sacrifice themselves as martyrs and suicide missiles, with promises that Paradise with unimaginable pleasures awaits those who sacrifice themselves in the holy cause of killing Jews.

This bottomless hatred, a hatred that pervades the Arab world in all strata of society and is incessantly fomented by Arab governments, including those supposed to be "at peace" with Israel, cannot be assuaged by negotiation or by making any further "sacrifices for peace". Nothing will suffice, except the destruction, the complete disappearance of Israel. The Arab states, having been unable in over fifty years and in many wars to defeat and exterminate the hated Jews, are now feverishly arming themselves with "conventional weapons" (easily purchased from the West, including, sad to say, from the United States), and are ardently pursuing the development of weapons of mass annihilation. Just as the suicide bombers do not vacillate to sacrifice themselves, one can safely expect that, once in possession of such weapons, the Arabs will not hesitate to sacrifice millions of their own people in order to destroy Israel. Israel's only course in the face of this almost certain prospect is to assume its previous stance of unflinching deterrence and, as it once did in the destruction of the Iraqi atomic reactor at Osirak in 1981, not to be inhibited by "international opinion" to preempt resolutely if it appears necessary to assure survival of the country.

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of our moral concern. Morality, Comte-Sponville argues, takes its bearings from a third form of love, *agape* or charity, the more selfless kind of affection whose primary aim is not to enjoy the presence of its object but to allow its object to flourish in its own fashion. This sort of love, therefore, has only persons for its object. Its paradigm is the good parent who steps back to let the child lead her own life and make her own mistakes.

Traditionally, charity belongs with faith and hope among the three supreme theological virtues. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul declared that of the three, charity is the highest, since faith and hope have no point in heaven and Christ himself had no need of them, being the very incarnation of God's love. For his part, Comte-Sponville is a resolute atheist, and yet his view is that the kingdom of earth, as morality would rule it, mirrors the kingdom of heaven so described. All the moral virtues consist in acting as we would act, were we filled with Christian charity. "Love, and do as you wish!" This is the Gospel according to André Comte-Sponville.

I have no idea how things work in heaven. But I am sure that love, if it is anything like love as this world knows it, cannot provide the foundations of morality in the way that Comte-Sponville assumes. Imagining what we would do were we full of charity, reining in our own ambitions so that others may prosper, is an inadequate basis for defining the various moral virtues and the actions that count as manifesting them. For one thing, all that we are likely to imagine is how such love would free us from the selfish concerns that keep us from acting as we already know that we ought to do. Love will appear, in other words, not as the inner meaning of generosity or justice, but as a feeling of goodwill with which we can more easily go about being generous or just.

But there is also the fact that love itself, even selfless love, gives rise to moral problems. Consider Comte-Sponville's favorite example of the loving mother, but suppose that she has two children, not one. However deep her love, it cannot tell her how she ought to divide her time between them. Suppose that one of the children is more needy than the other, even handicapped in some way. She must then figure out what would be fair for each: one of them will demand more of her attention, yet it would be wrong to neglect the other, sacrificing that child's happiness to the special needs of the first. It is her love that puts the mother in this painful situation, but it cannot be love alone that steers her through it. She must also turn to thoughts of justice.

This scenario illustrates in miniature the important truth that love, once its objects are many, does not place us beyond morality. It lands us right in the thick of it. We have to work out the proper way to distribute our affection. That is why couples who love themselves as well as each other cannot make do with love alone. And that is why John Rawls once rightly observed that justice—not love, not sympathy—is "the first virtue of social institutions."

Love is not a super-virtue that maps out the difference between right and wrong. It forms but one virtue among others. Comte-Sponville's ethics are inadequate, I think, in the way in which any version of "virtue ethics" will be inadequate. The moral virtues, understood as excellences of character that enhance our own humanity, cannot be defined at the level of virtue itself. We need to adopt a more abstract point of view. We have to determine the makeup of the human good in general as well as the principles for pursuing that good, not simply in our own case but impartially. Only from such an external vantage point are we able to judge what really deserves the name of "virtue."

For this reason, the modern focus on impartiality and the ongoing debate about its true meaning, a debate that divides the utilitarians and the Kantians, is not a wrong turn that we should seek to leave behind. It registers an abiding insight into the basis of morality. The idea of duty, the idea that some things are morally required of us independently of our own good, is not the imperfect expression of the moral life that Comte-Sponville and other "virtue ethicists" hold it to be. To be sure, we must then face the familiar question of what the source of our allegiance to impartial principles of duty can be. Yet perhaps this question is not so difficult as it seems.

An answer may indeed be hopeless if we must look to our own deepest aspirations and find a footing in our wish to lead a flourishing life ourselves. But what if we draw instead on the astonishing ability that we possess to see ourselves as but one person among many, to view ourselves from the outside, anonymously, as human beings are the only animals able to do? Might the capacity for distance, not the capacity for love, be the true foundation of morality?

To re-affirm the characteristic outlook of modern ethics is not to deny that we have much to learn from the ancients' concern with virtue. André Comte-Sponville's splendid renewal of this tradition is bound to sharpen our moral sensibility. But we must go further. Virtue may be back, but it cannot be the last word. ■

The Great Anarch

By DANIEL AARON

A Moral Temper: The Letters of Dwight Macdonald edited by Michael Wreszin

(Ivan R. Dee, 481 pp., $35)

DWIGHT MACDONALD, who died in 1982, was a rare creature in the United States of America, a self-propelled individualist unterrified by public opinion and well known for his heterodoxy, bluntness, and (not quite) uncalculated candor. It was as if his thoughts passed unsupervised into words. "There's something very moving and attractive," he wrote to a correspondent, "about anyone who is really serious and passionate about anything."

He was serious and passionate about many things, and although his impulse to protest and to attack lessened a little as he aged, he remained a chronic dissenter. In his crusading moments, he seemed to me the quintessential independent radical—a blend of Roger Williams, Orestes Brownson, Henry Thoreau, and John Jay Chapman (the last especially), with a pinch of Don Quixote and more than a dash of Randolph Bourne. At times he behaved "assfully," to use Mark Twain's word, but he was anchored to reality, and looked at the world without illusion, and rarely turned away from what he did not want to see or hear.

On occasion, Macdonald called himself an anarchist, a label with which he was

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comfortable, but he was never a part of the anarchist movement and he knew little of its history in America or abroad. "Maverick" better defines him, namely, one averse to group thought, suspicious of institutions and parties. The very thought of sinking into some amorphous entity such as the working class, the common man, the people, appalled him. From the late 1920s on, he entertained a variety of social theories without becoming a true believer in any of them. "Reason, skepticism, irony, satire" were his good words (later he would add "love"), but never "faith." He came to believe that morality, good ideas, and good writing were indivisible, and he defined himself a democrat in politics, an elitist in thought and taste. Such notions may partially account for the brickbats that he delivered and received.

Ten years before he died, Macdonald gave some thought to his "next large project." He had in mind a memoir or an "intellectual autobiography" (his phrase) of a journalist, editor, and literary critic. At sixty-seven, he was ready to review the record of himself preserved in a half-century of his letters. Thanks to his "lust for documentation," he had carbon-copied them, including his love letters, and could now look forward, as he put it, to "all the pleasure of a dirty old man voyeuristically tompeeping at his own past, Dwight's Last Tapes." He was finding it hard, however, to devise the "formless" and "anarchistic" style appropriate to a book that, it turned out, he had neither the will nor the capacity to produce. Perhaps there was no need for it anyway. He had already spun out the salient parts of his history in the letters that he had been dispatching since his adolescence. This selection of them, knowingly compiled without fussy over-editing by his biographer Michael Wreszin, is in effect an abridgment of Macdonald's abandoned book as well as a first-rate introduction to an uncommon American and his times.

A MORAL TEMPER opens in 1920 with the fourteen-year-old schoolboy writing to his father from Phillips Exeter Academy. He is too busy to feel homesick. It closes with a letter written seven months before his death (in December 1982) to one of his two sons, reporting that he never felt better. The letters in between comprise a kind of epistolary history of the intervening years.

At Yale, precocious Macdonald happily flourished. Full of piss and vinegar and engagingly pleased with himself, he pontificated on the books on which he was gorging, evinced his disrespect for respected elders, and won prizes. After graduating from college in 1928 and wasting six months as a trainee in the Macy's department store executive program ("from now on I freely accept that I am an intellectual-artist-man of ideas"), he began his six-year stint with the Henry Luce publications and wrote a series of substantial articles for *Fortune* magazine. He was good at his job and well paid. All the same he resigned in 1936, bored by the business world and convinced that capitalists were stupid and corrupt.

In the decade between 1938 and 1948, Macdonald became known for his obstreperous journalism. He was also a pain in the neck both to doctrinaire radicals, Trotsky among them, and to a number of fellow nonconformists with whom he seemed to be in perpetual friction. By the 1950s he had pulled away from the Marxists and was calling himself an anarchist-pacifist; in 1969 he knew what he was against (he was no longer willing "to be bullied in the name of 'the masses'") but not what he was for. Having renounced "perverted" left pieties, he made social justice the "precondition of a decent new order" and "bureaucratic collectivism," rooted in Stalin's USSR but latent everywhere, its chief obstacle. His unremitting war against the totalitarian state by no means made him an apologist *tout court* for the United States, but it bolstered his trust in America's democratic traditions. He acknowledged himself "a fan of the U.S. Constitution."

Some of the livelier letters in *A Moral Temper* are replies to other members of what has come to be known as the "New York Intellectuals," a more disparate company than commonly supposed. Macdonald was something of an exotic in this loosely federated family of argumentative individualists and warring scribes. His "frank" letters to them were breezy and direct, as if he felt morally obligated not to pussyfoot in commenting on their work or their behavior. Thus, painful as it was, an old pal, sociologist C. Wright Mills, had to be told that his new book, *The Power Elite*, was "terrible" (an egregious misjudgment), and Daniel Bell, a lifelong friend, that his "streak of careerism" had noticeably widened. (Was Bell seeking a niche "in this rotten system"?) Did the conservative and highly esteemed historian John Lukacs consider himself "a genius and so exempt from social courtesy"? A letter to literary critic Irving Howe began positively ("I like you and think you've got a great talent"), but went on to warn Howe that his "cottonwool orotundities" threatened his "intellectual future." Genially but unsparingly, Macdonald banged away at his fallible friends.

Not that he was easy on himself. After reproving an author or a book with which he found fault, he might hyperbolically reprove himself for making snap judgments or for behaving badly at a literary party. But he consoled himself with the thought that it was not the critic's job to offer "constructive" or "practical" advice: it was to praise the "good" in a work of art and to "damn the bad." Hence his comical assaults on middlebrow best-sellers and his refusal to give delinquent authors "the tiniest break." If he sounded unduly sharp on occasion, it was not out of anger—only to draw "clear distinctions" and "to cut clearly, as with a razor." He also knew that his well-staged demolitions were popular with his readers, and he admitted his pleasure in "sticking pins" into pretentious people. Most of his satirical vignettes are good-humored:

> Today I talked with Earl Browder, secretary and big shot of the U.S. Communist Party. He's a little man with a shrewd smile, a cigar clamped in yellowish teeth, and the ready, somewhat evasive answers of the small-town lawyer or politician. Neither a worker nor an intellectual,

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certainly not a revolutionary. He sits at a desk in a bare room in the shadow of a gigantic (five feet high) bust of Lenin. An amusing contrast between his prosaic shrewdness and the melodramatic, scowling, insanely enormous bust of Lenin.

Macdonald's air of clinical disinterest did not always sit well with his literary associates, some of whom heard anti-Semitic overtones in his remarks about and to the "Boys," namely his fellow editors at *The Partisan Review*. Perhaps, he allowed in a relentlessly honest memo to himself, there "may have been an unconscious anti-Semitism" in his reaction to "Semitism" (by which he meant Jewish nationalism), but never overt racial prejudice. The "Jewish" names and faces cropping up in his correspondence, he protested, were no more than sociological data. "You know, we both look Jewish, or at least Semitic," he wrote to a woman friend: "big, floridly curved noses and also a sly, reflective, withdrawn look." Sympathizing with the victimized anywhere and spontaneously pro-underdog, he still had little patience with people he considered super-sensitive to social slights, real or fancied. Jews were no longer being fed to the lions. Blacks, by dint of their own efforts and with a boost from the Supreme Court, were beginning to take their rightful "place in the normal community of human beings." Neither minority any longer had reason either to claim exemption "from the ordinary give and take of criticism" or to settle for a condescending benevolence.

As for himself, any kind of "head-patting," as Macdonald called it, made him bristle, especially when it was his head that was being patted and the patters were the same people who praised his journalism while pronouncing him a "wooly-wit" with "will-o'-the-wisp, absolutist-utopian romantic political ideas." It depressed him to be told that his politics sprang from his neurotic antagonisms and that his magazine, *Politics*, was "eccentric, sectarian, and out of the mainspring of radical thought." The self-image projected in *A Moral Temper* (keen-eyed Diogenes among a host of one-eyed men) might have struck even his fans as far-fetched, but read today the letters have an abiding integrity: they limn a tomahawking polemicist, but also a serious jester. Readers for whom the issues of McCarthyism and the ideological sniping of the 1950s and 1960s ring no bells can still savor the comedy in Macdonald's altercations: his reply to the demand of William Buckley that he apologize for impugning *National Review* ("Apologize indeed! Who do you think you are, you wretched solemn little sectarian, a sovereign state?"), and his facetious dismissal of Anthony West's criticism of Baudelaire in *The New Yorker*:

> Here let me say, in general, that the Procrustean bed of morality on which West stretches his eminent victims fits almost none of the great nineteenth-century writers (or of any other century's writers). In fact he has a life work cut out for him. When will he get around to Poe, B's American counterpart, a liar, sponger, drunk, and sexual fantast? Or Coleridge (drugs, laziness), Byron (incest, irregular hours), Whitman (homosexuality), Wilde (ditto plus dadaism and snobbishness), Flaubert (who hated the bourgeoisie and the masses as much as Baudelaire and is therefore also partly responsible for Buchenwald and Ravensbruck), Swinburne (infantilism, sado-masochism), Carlyle (impotence, also deplorably ill-tempered), Dostoevsky (an epileptic whose pan-Slavic, authoritarian ideas led directly to Stalinism), Nietzsche (madness, and oh my oh my that awful Superman!), and Verlaine (everything)? About the only nineteenth-century writer who is completely safe from our Savonarola is Robert Browning, a man of sterling character, positive and optimistic temper, and impeccable family life.

The letters are also testimonials to Macdonald's political and social intransigence. He saw no reason to soft-pedal his gripes about America at home or abroad or to pretend a group loyalty he didn't feel: good manners applied "to relations between individuals and not what one says or writes about countries, public figures, or books." It was his duty as well as his privilege to speak out unreservedly. "Patriotism has never been my strong point," he told a London editor in 1958 who had called him a "Good American." Better a "Critical American," he suggested, who preferred "your country, morally and culturally, to my own." His sojourn in England two years before as a correspondent for the Congress of Cultural Freedom and friendly exchanges with the likes of T. S. Eliot, George Orwell, Malcolm Muggeridge, and Stephen Spender had been a cherished interlude. It made him feel that at heart he was a cultural traditionalist and averse to the "crudity, dullness, and vulgarity" of both the left and the right. This conclusion did not weaken his feeling of solidarity with ordinary people. He may have loved or hated some of them, but he treated no one with contempt.

Rumors that *Encounter* and its anti-Communist French, German, and Italian equivalents were being funded by the American government were widely bruited in 1955 when Macdonald went to London as "editorial consultant." He impatiently brushed them aside. The best way to dispose of "that hoary canard," he advised Irving Kristol, would be to print "drastic criticisms of the USA." How to account for his gullibility when even his wife took for granted *Encounter*'s "official" imprimatur? Perhaps it was simply wishful thinking. Churning in his head was a plan for a re-designed *Encounter* that he hoped to co-edit.

It never got off the ground, but what Macdonald had in mind was a re-tooled version of *Politics*, the magazine he had spun out of himself in 1944 and edited sporadically until 1949. A letter to Stephen Spender in 1955 sketches his long-harbored vision of a high-level political/cultural journal. The new *Encounter* would feature his own department of "political and technical comment." It would welcome critical letters to stir up discussion ("the more violent the better") and desert the "dreary battleground where all-too-familiar viewpoints clash emptily against each other." Instead of passively waiting for material to flow in, it would commission fresh and lively antagonists to write pieces ("concrete, limited") on everyday life. Another department would focus on "mass and popular culture" without neglecting academic magazines. Most important, it would resist the current tendency "to inflate every idea into a full-dress article" and fill its pages with notes, aperçus, unconnected paragraphs. In short, it would reflect Dwight Macdonald's turbulent cosmos.

Given the realpolitik of the cold war days, Macdonald's blueprint for an independent "political-social" magazine was out of tune with the CIA's primary objectives. His anti-Communist credentials were sound enough, but he was too politically and intellectually wayward to pilot a company ship. He lacked "balance." His obstinate "questioning of the U.S. way of life" and ethical hair-splittings could have become an embarrassment. So in lieu of his stillborn magazine, we are left with Macdonald himself peering out of his correspondence, questioning, hectoring, expostulating. The letters cast no new light on his character and personality. They may reveal for some of his readers an unsuspected literary sensibility.

Just after he got married in 1935, he wrote to his wife, occasioned by his reading of Henry James, that he had little personal or intellectual vanity but "a great deal of literary vanity." Literary style for him was substantive: how one wrote in essence was what one wrote. ("Style is the man—and also the politics.") From his

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college days Macdonald had sprinkled his letters to friends with caveats on good and bad writing. He was alert to the tricks of tendentious argument, noted how "shrewdly chosen adjectives and neatly turned phrases" in *Time* magazine substituted for documentation, and how one might learn more "from a well-written defense of a weak position" than "from a muddled exposition of a line one agrees with." The letters spell out his tastes and biases, his preference for "craftsmanship" over "genius."

One suspects that at bottom Macdonald felt less confident with savants and heavy thinkers than he did with literary folk. The breadth and the specificity of his views of writers whom he liked or whose reputations he wanted to explode suggest a busy and curious reader at home in the world of letters and assured in his literary judgments. He is a very specific appreciator and deprecator. He knows precisely why Stendhal belongs in the Great Good Place (along with Tolstoy and Henry James) and why Hemingway does not, and why Poe, of all American writers, fascinates him "in a personal way."

It was Poe's "intellectual and artistic detachment, his coldness even," Macdonald explained, that attracted him. Hawthorne and Melville, he conceded, may have been superior artists, but Poe's failures interested him more than their successes. He marveled at the clarity and the intellectual passions of his "most wrong-headed and 'fugitive' reviews," his talent for transmuting trash into art, and above all his "inability ever to be out of character." No matter what or when he wrote, it was "always Poe speaking."

And it was always "Macdonald speaking" in his letters to friends and strangers, editors and publishers, subscribers to *Politics*, to T.S. Eliot, Mary McCarthy, George Orwell, Norman Thomas, Nicola Chiaromonte, Czeslaw Milosz, John F. Kennedy. The public letters are likely to be slightly more formal in tone and style than the private ones—that is to say, less salted with contractions and parentheses—but all of them have a smell of the impromptu and the impolitic.

At Yale, his disrespect for authority figures in and out of the university had impelled his class-conscious and socially correct mother to caution: "You must be politic all the time whether you like it or not." That all depended, Macdonald replied, on what she meant by "politic":

> If you mean that one should not injure others' feelings wantonly or through sheer egotism, that one can use tact in dealing with people in matters that are not important, I agree with you. But if you mean that one should keep silent in the face of cant and lies and evil and silliness and stupidity and injustice merely in order to save one's hide, I do not. I believe that no one of any intelligence or justice is going to think any the worse of one for speaking out his mind. And as for the others, I don't much care what they think.

He practiced what he preached for the next half-century. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

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Instead of concocting a story to fit his worldview, Giridharadas should have asked the OECD why it is wrong for governments to face competition. Or asked the French government why low-tax nations should have to put French tax laws above their own. Or asked black caucus leaders whether it is appropriate for the OECD to target small, non-white nations while giving developed nations a free pass. Unfortunately, the author missed a chance to make a contribution to an important debate.

DANIEL J. MITCHELL
Senior Fellow
The Heritage Foundation
Washington, D.C.

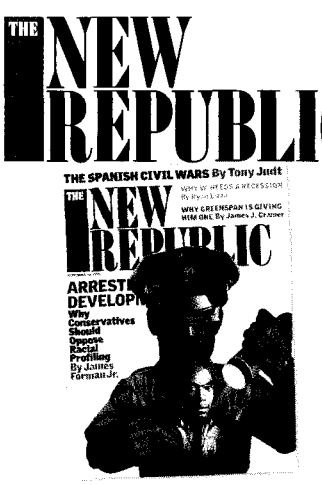
TO THE EDITORS:
The most interesting comment in Giridharadas's "Saved Havens" was his statement that the Center for Freedom and Prosperity refuses to provide details on its contributors. Law-abiding U.S. taxpayers get little if any tax benefit from the tax havens, as they have to report all foreign bank and brokerage accounts as well as foreign transactions generally. Based on their activities they will pay whatever taxes are due. U.S.-based multinationals benefit substantially, not from the tax havens but from the OECD project that strives to eliminate harmful tax competition. Such a project puts such companies in a better competitive position vis-à-vis foreign MNCs. Accordingly, the only U.S. persons who really benefit from the tax haven activity are tax evaders. While I don't know either who contributed to the CFP, I would guess that they might be persons who do not know their U.S. tax liabilities or tax evaders.

JOSEPH H. GUTTENTAG
Former Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Tax Affairs
Former Chairman of the Committee on Fiscal Affairs of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
Washington, D.C.

Innocence lost

TO THE EDITORS:
Gary Condit's behavior is of interest to those of us who care about our daughters and about the whereabouts of Chandra Levy ("Innocent Until..." by Andrew Sullivan, September 10). To say that Condit talked to the police means nothing: Those who have done something wrong generally try to personify innocence, which would require talking to the police. Condit may be innocent, but as a mom, I think he acts like one of my kids trying not to get caught.

KAREN ELLIOT
Crawfordsville, Indiana



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NEW HAVEN DIARIST

Interrupted

AT YALE, LATE IN THE nineteenth century and a decade into the twentieth, the great American thinker William Graham Sumner taught "a course in all known knowledge." A haughty claim. But then there was less known knowledge than there is now. And Graham's intellectual achievements were, indeed, gargantuan, as anybody who has glanced at his books, *What Social Classes Owe Each Other* (1883) or *Folkways* (1906) will quickly understand.

DONALD COHEN JOINED THE YALE faculty as an associate professor of medicine in 1972, exactly one hundred years after Sumner, and even then—barely in his thirties—he was thought by very exacting people to know just about everything, or at least to know how to know it. Donald was one of the more subtle polymaths of his generation. C.P. Snow's "two cultures" predicament—which supposedly rendered science and the humanities mutually unintelligible—never applied to him. Nor, for that matter, did the epistemological dichotomies that limit how others think: the abstract vs. the pragmatic, the symbolic vs. the utilitarian, the theological vs. the technical. Donald moved from one sphere and style to another with sinuous and suggestive facility.

I SUSPECT THAT THIS LIBERATING dexterity came from his work as an especially imaginative child psychiatrist. For him, childhood was both prophecy and possibility. Understanding children meant grasping all at once what was concrete and what was metaphoric in their minds, the real experience and what it meant to them (mostly) in fantasy and in fear. Donald was trained in psychoanalysis. His writing and his speech were allusive, evocative, intimate. Early on, however, he saw the limitations of the figurative diagnosis and the always elusive constructed cure. As a result, Donald was among the first careful few to successfully anchor childhood troubles in molecular and genetic origins, and he did much of the "hard" science that has helped doctors and parents of this generation temper and tame Tourette's syndrome, attention deficit disorder, and autism. These were his certified specialties. But they did not exhaust his real gift, which was the intuitive comprehension of other people's troubles and of ways to help them. I know children and adults he helped, and he helped almost all of them when they were at the end of their road.

DONALD COHEN'S END CAME ON October 2, the first day of Succot, the Jewish Feast of the Tabernacles, which commemorates the Exodus journey. On my last visit with him, a few weeks before he died, he explained to me that in Judaism feasts are as compelling as fasts, or should be. He seemed to lament the primacy of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which comes one week before Succot but had not yet come when I sat with him. He knew that he was dying (although we all still hoped that the rare ocular melanoma that had ravaged him might yet stabilize and permit some more experimental treatment). And, knowing that, he was preparing his family to be without him and preparing himself to leave this world. I have never known someone to behave so rationally in the face of death, but also with direct emotion and undisguised lament. He had much to do. His sudden illness had interrupted him in the middle of everything. His marriage of 37 years was still a love affair. His work had taken a new turn. So life kept interrupting his dying. As we sat together, a colleague called about a scientific question. His mother called. And then there was the call from the trauma center he had set up in Tel Aviv during the Gulf war, which was still functioning under the permanent stress of besieged Israel. He helped build child mental health services in the West Bank and Gaza. This observant Jew and passionate Zionist had also midwifed the first regional organization of Arab child psychiatrists. His teaching knew no boundaries. It's axiomatic that he would have acolytes in Israel. But he has acolytes in China, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Europe, and Latin America as well.

WHEN I MET DONALD THE FIRST time, 44 years ago at Brandeis, he taught me something I didn't know. The last time I saw him he taught me something I didn't know. Every time we saw each other he taught me something, sometimes a surprising fact, more often an important insight. But, whatever it was, he always contrived to make it seem as if I was teaching him. He always called me "Motl," my Yiddish name. Talking with friends after the solemn and tactile cemetery ceremony during which everyone shovels some dirt onto the gravesite, I realized that this was not just his way with me. It was his way. And though I knew him quite well, I learned much at the funeral that I did not know. I learned that he was even more—much more—than I had known: more learned, more accomplished, more worldly, more distinguished in the field of mental health and psychiatry, more of a jock, more of a Yalie, even more tender—and this greater tenderness is almost beyond imagining. I cried that day in New Haven and have since—cried for him, for his family, for the world, really, and also for myself.

THERE WERE MANY POLICE AT Donald's funeral, and not because anyone expected an unruly crowd (although the crowd was enormous). The police were there because Donald had initiated a partnership between Yale's Child Study Center, which he headed, and the New Haven Police Department. As a result of that partnership, mental health professionals arrive with the law at any house where violence occurs. Police learn from the mental health folk and the mental health folk learn from the police. Children, who are often the victims and almost always the witnesses of violence, receive a different kind of attention, and that attention makes the good of the child an aim rather than an afterthought. Donald's simple idea has had intricate but beneficent consequences, and the program has been replicated in other jurisdictions. Once, not so long ago, Donald and I were walking out of Yale's Beinecke Library—he had shown me some rare Jewish text—and his cell phone rang. He listened and then said to me, "Sorry, I have to go. I'm off with a police detail, the real hands-on work of a psychiatrist."

DONALD WAS NOT EXACTLY A stand-up comedian; he was a sitting-down comedian. His humor was almost always in response to what other people said. It was conversational humor. And he could make the best of even a weak line. He had given me a grim picture of his condition on the phone, and so when I saw him I said: "You know, you don't look so bad." To which he replied: "I know. And I also look better than my x-rays." This was his mordant way of telling me not to be deluded. He was eager to live. But he also accepted what fate had in store. The God to whom Donald prayed and with whom he argued, both as a scientist and as a Jew, failed to write his name in the Book of Life for the coming year. "Blessed is the righteous judge," says the traditional idiom to which Donald Cohen was loyal. It is harder for me.

MARTIN PERETZ

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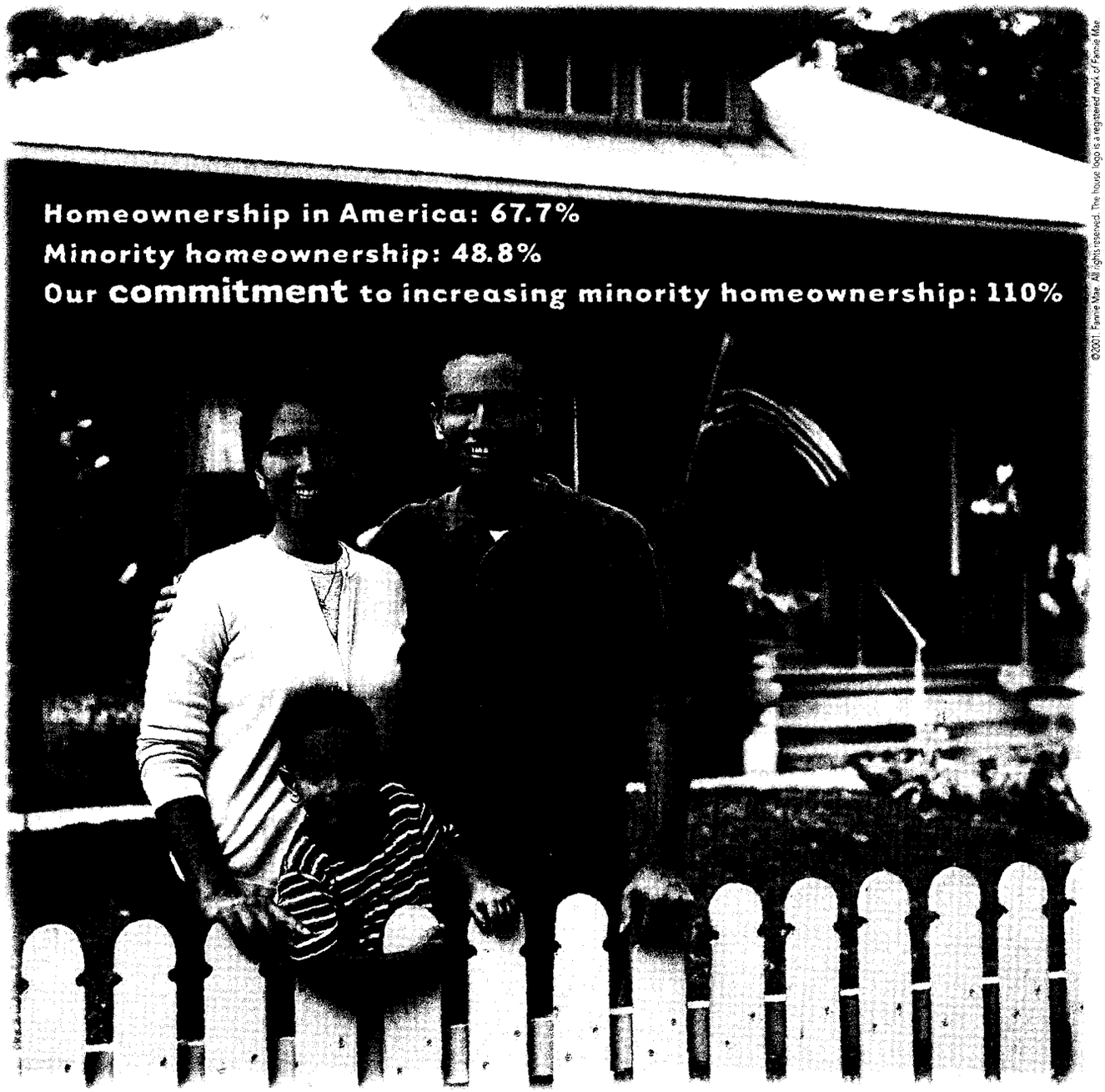

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